The narratives I have encountered in my journey have made it possible for me to conceive patterns of being as my life among others has expanded: to look through others' eyes more than I would have and to imagine being something more than I have come to be.

–Maxine Greene (1995)

University of Alberta

Composing a Curriculum of Lives: A Narrative Inquiry into the Interwoven Intergenerational Stories of Teachers, Children, and Families

by

Simmee Chung

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Department of Elementary Education
Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 2008

Library and Archives Canada

Published Heritage Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-46993-4
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-46993-4

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

ABSTRACT

This year long narrative inquiry, part of a national study, draws upon a conceptual framework of teacher personal practical knowledge, professional knowledge landscapes and stories to live by to study the experiences of teachers, children and families on a school landscape. The study adopted a multi-perspectival, intergenerational focused on the complex intersection of children's, teachers' and families' lives in curriculum making. Field texts included field notes on classroom events, conversations with parents and children, classroom artifacts and autobiographical writing by the teacher. The thesis includes two papers for publication with an opening and closing chapter. The study highlights the importance of attending to a teacher's personal practical knowledge as she works with children and to the shaping influences of parents' knowledge on curriculum making. Working from a view of curriculum that acknowledges teacher and children as curriculum makers, the study illuminates the complexity of negotiating a curriculum of lives in school.

Acknowledgements

It is the diversity and depth of the characters in my life that have given my stories rhythm. To know the whole of me is to know the multiple threads that resonate in my web of life. Extraordinary individuals encircle me; their love and encouragement inspires me to pursue my passions and imagine new possibilities in the making.

I am most fortunate to have in my life, Jean Clandinin, my supervisor, mentor, and friend. Jean, thank you for your patience, guidance, and love. From the moment I met you and Pam Steeves, you both took me in, an unpolished stone, giving me opportunities that I never imagined possible for myself. Your unwavering belief that I could, each week, " Go and write something beautiful," kept me moving onward. With you by my side, my dreams grow bigger and hopefully more "exquisite" with each chapter yet to come. Jean, I hope I will continue to make you proud.

I would also like to thank Jennifer Mitton and Janice Huber; two of the most reflective and amazing researchers with whom I was privileged to learn from and work alongside of in projects that I hold dear to me.

This research would not have possible without the children and their families who shared their stories with me. I would especially like to thank Vlad, Elizabeth (Ji-Sook) and her mother, Mrs. Han, for entrusting me with their "secret" stories. Ji-Sook, thank you for teaching me about what it truly means to belong. You are a brave, unique little girl who has a gift of making everyone feel like they belong. Mrs. Han, thank you for sharing your dreams and hopes with me and with other families who will read your stories. I know there were hard to tell stories; yet you found the strength to do so.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Ji-Sook Yeom. Ji-Sook, thank you for coming from Korean and volunteering your time in order to help me better attend to Mrs. Han's words and her stories. Your translations enabled us to sustain rich conversations. I am grateful that you, too, found the space to share your stories alongside.

Thank you to my committee members for their support and thought-provoking insights. Sylvia Barton, thank you for your gentle and careful manner in which you attended to this work in progress. I appreciated your words and wonders that made me reflect upon my practice. Florence Glanfield, thank you for asking me the hard questions and sharing your expertise. Your insights made me imagine new possibilities in my classroom as well as in my research. Jean Clandinin, you never cease to amaze me with how well you know me. Even when posed with the same question, you understand why my response will never be the same. I learned there are no scripts written for me, nor for others. We all have the ability to be authors of our own lives. Thank you for teaching me to attend in new ways to every gift.

I would also like to thank the Social Studies and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for their support to the larger study held by Jean Clandinin, Anne Murray-Orr, Janice Huber and Shaun Murphy; I was able to undertake my Master's study in the context of the larger study alongside these exceptional teacher researchers. I would also like to acknowledge the other individuals who I was privileged to work with: Jennifer Mitton, and Jennifer Tinkham, and Bill Murphy. I look forward to re-imagining the possibilities in curriculum making with each of you.

I want to thank all the people at the Centre table. At a time where I did not consider myself to be a researcher, you made me feel like my stories had a place. Special thanks to Pam Steeves, Claire Desrochers and Yi Li.

Maureen Stratton Lemieux, it is you who encouraged me to begin my academic journey. I have fond memories of our walks together along the unpaved paths. Thank you for your guidance, wisdom and understanding. I think of you often.

My deepest thanks to Ronda Borchert, Lori Bosworth, and David Sobolewski; you are my second family and my excellent teachers. Thank you for providing me with ongoing guidance and sharing in my excitement in all that I do. You inspire me to be a better person and teacher through your exemplary leadership. I appreciate your support in both my career and my personal dreams. Thank you for inspiring me to put the bounce in my step and reach for the "Tigger" inside of me. Most of all, thank you for inviting me into a "world of wonder."

Van Vo Kim, it's like our minds operate as one for you often know what I am thinking even before I say a word. You understand the heart of me. I am always touched by your care and encouragement that keeps me grounded and forever hopeful. Even in the strongest storms, I know I am never alone, for you, will be right by my side with a lifejacket in hand, ready to jump into the waters with me.

Leanna Chan, you are more like a sister to me. I am always in awe of your strength and devotion to your friends and family. You have the ability to make those around you feel so special and loved. I am so lucky to have you in my life. You are my friend who will stand firmly beside me, embracing me and all the challenges that come our way. Leanna, thank you for being my sounding board, rooting me on regardless of

wherever you are in the world. You always make time to listen to my stories and to dream along with me.

Ryan Guanlao and Christine Boucher-Guanlao, thank you both for your love, understanding, and patience. I treasure every conversation we have together, from our chats about nothing to the profound where you make me think so deeply. Thank you teaching me to see and appreciate the bigger picture in life. I can always count on you both to be there for me, cheering me on through the clouds and all the "clean sweeps." I am no super woman, but friends like you keep me humble. Rye and Chrissy, if there was an "s on my chest," it would represent our solid friendship. You are my pillars of strength. Thank you for taking my hand and dancing with me, in both rain and sunshine.

Debra Santos, my first friend in Edmonton. Thank you for your thoughtfulness and friendship throughout the years. You taught me that the best things come to those who wait. Thank you for believing in the unknown with me. I look forward to experiencing new beginnings alongside of you.

Trang Nguyen and Kenneth Michetti, without the both of you, many chapters may have been left unwritten. Thank you for your friendship, care, and companionship throughout this process. I am always amazed and inspired by your dedication to your individual crafts. Thank you for sharing in my excitement along the way and letting me read to you, the bits and pieces. In your company, I look forward to writing new chapters.

Marcie Syme, my friend who thinks of the whole world before herself. Your devotion to teaching and to helping others constantly inspires me. I strive to be a fraction of the teacher you already are. Thank you for always being there for me and

encouraging me to take risks in life. You are a beautiful person and I am so lucky to be able to learn from you and with you.

Colleen Reeder, you constantly inspire me with your adventurous spirit, strength, and your willingness to take risks in life. You teach me to aspire for more, to reach for the seemingly impossible and to never settle for anything but the best in life and out of life. I look forward to many more adventures together for the best chapters have yet to be written.

Kevin Quan, thank you for being my cheerleader, my confidant and voice of reason during times of uncertainty. You taught me the importance of honouring the past while also embracing and living in the present moment. You inspire me to think of life as a great adventure, perhaps as if we were on a spontaneous motorcycle ride going down a winding highway, pushing ourselves beyond our limitations. When we reach outside of the boundaries that confine us, we come to know who we are and the strength we hold. Thank you for encouraging me to embrace new challenges and to enjoy the longer, more scenic roads in life by taking the paths less chosen.

My loving cousins, Paddy, Sandy and Chapman Lee, you are like brothers who are always there for me. To the twins, thank you for setting the bar so high. And to my dear cousin, Holmann Wong, thank you for teaching me how to dream big at seven years of age. I now know how to run my own lemonade stand. And thank you for teaching me how to "cut and paste."

To my siblings, William and Peki Chung, thank you filling in the gaps to my stories and for knowing me in the ways only a sister and brother could. You both taught me how to persevere in life in spite of its challenges. Peki, I want to thank you for

taking care of me when we were little and still watching out for me now. William, thank you for putting a hockey stick into my hand when I was little; I know you were shaping me into the brother you always secretly wanted.

Thank you to my family who took care of me like I was their own daughter. My uncles: S.K. Lee and Albert Wong. My aunts: Helen Lee, Carol Wong, and Monisa Wong. And to my loving,"adopted" family: Mike and Francine Boucher.

Special thanks to both new and old friends who continue to provide me with love and support: Jimmy, Chau, Dzung, Victor, Ray-Ray, Billy, Ronny, Angelina, Angela, Mandy, Jay-Po, Chantelle, Mark, and Lillian. Dan the Man, thank you for helping me at the eleventh hour.

Lastly, I would especially like to thank the two most precious people in my life: Shui Han and Tin Lin Chung. Mom and dad, thank you for your unconditional love and tireless devotion to your family and to others. Your frequent acts of generousity touch all those around you. Thank you for making so many sacrifices in your lives in the hopes of giving us the opportunities to pursue our dreams.

Dad, you may say little but your strength shines through. You taught me how to be resilient and find the humour in life. Thank you for being a quiet force in my life.

Mom, you are the greatest inspiration in which I draw from in my life. Your love and care has guided me through each chapter of my life. Even when you may have disagreed with some of my choices, you have always supported me as I pursued them. I am in awe of your strength and spirit. You are a strong and beautiful, like your mother -my grandmother. I hope you are as proud of me as I am to have you as my mother.

This book is dedicated to all families who have lived on the margins,

with hopes and dreams,

and stories yet to tell,

to my parents,

who inspire me and remind me of where I came from,

for me to know where I am going,

what I knew first stays with me...

mom and dad,

love you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Coming to the Research 1
Introduction 2
Beginning to Frame my Research Puzzle 3
Coming to the Classroom Study 7
Methodology 7
Narrative Inquiry 7
Coming to the Research Participants 8
From Field to Field Texts to Interim and Final Research Texts 9
Theoretical Frameworks 11
Chapter Two 11
Chapter Three 12
References 14

Chapter 2: The Interwoven Stories of Teachers, Families and Children in Curriculum Making 17
A Sense of the Whole 17
Vibrations on the Web 19
Story Fragment 1: So Korean 21
Story Fragment 2: A Bouquet of Flowers 23
Story Fragment 3: Living a Presence of Being Korean 25
Story Fragment 4: Tensions on the Web 27
Story Fragment 5: Naming the Tensions on the Web 29
Story Fragment 6: Gaps and Silences In and Between Webs 35
A Sense of the Whole: Making Spaces for Families in Curriculum Making 39
References 42

Chapter 3: My Stories...No, *Our* Stories 44
Introduction: Slowly Awakening 44
Coming to the Research Puzzle 46
Vibrating Stories 50
First Landscapes: The Fish and Chip Shop 50
Earlier Landscapes: Leaving What I Knew First 51
Shifting Landscapes: Everyone's Garden 53
Blurring Past and Present Landscapes: A Bean Sprout 55
Treasured Landscapes: Tattered "Little Sister" 56
Reliving, Retelling...in the Margins 59
Vibrating into the Classroom: A Right-Sided Heart 62
In-between Spaces: Retelling the Stories 64
References 68

Chapter 4: A Reflective Turn: Moving towards composing a "curriculum of lives" 70
Beginning with a 'master' story 70
Letting go of the 'master' story 72
References 76

Chapter One: Coming to the Research

Introduction

Vivian Paley (1986) once said, "Real change comes about only through the painful recognition of one's own vulnerabilities"(p.123). Coming to recognize my own vulnerabilities and tensions helped me compose and recompose my "unknowing" and "knowing"(Vinz, 1997) as a teacher and as a researcher narratively inquiring into my own lived and told stories. Through composing and recomposing my knowing and unknowing, I engaged in what Vinz (1997) calls the practice of "shifting valances of dispositioning"(p.145). She describes this dispositioning as a process in which educators move between "unknowing, giving up present understandings (positions) of our teaching" to "not knowing: to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty" (Vinz, 1997, p.139). By shifting between the knowing and unknowing in my early and present storied landscapes, I find myself storying and restorying my "personal practical knowledge." Connelly and Clandinin (1988) define personal practical knowledge as in each:

> teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. Personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practice. It is, for any teacher, a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of present situation (p.25).

Personal practical knowledge is the knowledge teachers hold and express in their practice. Teachers' personal practical knowledge is both personal and social. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) conceptualize teachers' personal practical knowledge as a dialectic between each teacher's personal knowledge and his/her social contexts as her/his knowledge is shaped and lived out. In order to understand this dialectical relationship between the personal and the social in teacher knowledge, I draw on what Clandinin and Connelly call the professional knowledge landscape, a metaphor they use to describe a narrative understanding of school contexts. Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape is a way to conceptualize space, place, and time and the diversity which distinguishes one landscape from another in the form of people, events, and relationships. Landscapes are understood not as static sites in which people's stories to live by (Connelly and Clandinin 1999), their identities, are fixed, but are places which shape and are shaped by those who live within them.

These conceptualizations helped me reflect on my life both in and between my places on and off school landscapes. As I engaged in reflections on my personal practical knowledge and the places that shaped my knowing as well as on my past and current professional knowledge landscapes, I experienced moments of tension. Inquiring into my own stories, past, present, and possibilities, I began to attend more closely to the ways in which my students and I were co-composing a curriculum of lives, a process of negotiating and renegotiating the "stories we live by" (Clandinin, 2007) on a classroom landscape.

Beginning to Frame my Research Puzzle

One might wonder how and why I began my narrative inquiry. What compelled me to engage in over four years of narrative inquiry into the interwoven, intergenerational stories of teachers, children and their families? Although I cannot quite pinpoint the beginnings of my narrative inquiry, I know my curiosity began with a question that lived at the forefront of my professional landscape. As I wondered how I could become a better teacher, I awakened to understanding that I was seeing things 'small', asking myself questions from the vantage point of seeing things small. Through piecing together my research puzzle, I came to understand what Greene (1995) describes as seeing 'big' by asking myself deeper questions that I had never before thought to ask. Maxine Greene in *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) wrote of the importance of distinguishing seeing small from seeing big.

> To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviours from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. One must see from the point of the participants in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainties they face (p.10).

For the past ten years, I have been an elementary teacher in three schools, which differed not only in geography but also in their cultural, economic and social contexts. In my first school, I taught children from an increasingly transient community. Thinking small I thought about these children as coming from primarily lower to middle class socio-economic backgrounds. Three years later, I taught in a school which offered a trilingual program. The children were from socio-economic backgrounds similar to the first school. Currently, the children I teach are from fairly affluent backgrounds. In these three schools where I have been privileged to teach, although the children's and their family's socio-economic backgrounds differed, drastically in some cases, there were a few things that were not so different. The children and families in all of these schools came from a diverse range of cultural and social contexts. I understood them as all living and telling unique stories. Each family had stories to tell, some heard, some silenced. I realized that, after six years of teaching and of trying to attend to the increasingly diverse emotional, cognitive, and cultural needs of my students, I still had so much to learn as a teacher. Therefore, when I was granted a sabbatical leave from my school district, I left the classroom for a year in order to pursue graduate studies focusing on Language Arts and Literacy Education.

Of course there was trepidation leaving the classroom place, a familiar and somewhat comfortable place. However, I was driven in ways by the question of how I could become a better teacher. I grew excited to return to school as a student again as I wondered what "best practices" I would learn in graduate school and what new programs were available. I was in hot pursuit of an almighty "silver bullet" and other

ready-made programs to help my students, particularly my struggling learners. Thoughts of being dispositioned were far from my mind.

As I planned my itinerary for the first semester, I came across one course titled, "Life in the Elementary Classroom." Although my area of focus was in the Language Arts, I thought this would be a relevant course to take for shouldn't I know something about life in the elementary classroom having taught in a variety of school settings with children from diverse backgrounds (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007). As the class progressed, I was not prepared for the questions that unfolded, questions that guided me into new ways of "unknowing" and "knowing" my students and myself.

As I worked through the class activities, readings and conversations, I realized that my position on my professional knowledge landscape was largely shaped by my past experiences on both in and out of school places. In the midst of my narrative autobiographical inquiry that became the class focus for me, questions unfolded, questions that created tensions for me. Why do I teach the way that I teach? How can I truly honour my students and their families? Have I ever silenced the voices of my students from culturally diverse backgrounds by speaking for them or worse yet, not hearing them at all (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007)? I awakened to a broader question outlining the frame of my personal and professional landscape. Who am I? Who am I as a teacher, a daughter, and a graduate student? Can I have any sense of my students and their families if I do not know who I am and where I came from? At the time, I did not realize that I had to engage in what Maxine Greene (1995) called seeing big rather than seeing small. I began to learn to see 'big' in that first autobiographical narrative inquiry.

This engagement in the pursuit of who I was, am, and can become as an

educator awakened me to narrative inquiry. I remember my reluctance when my teachers in the course Life in the Elementary Classroom, Dr. Jean Clandinin and Dr. Pam Steeves, asked class members to bring in a photograph. They asked us to speak to it, to write about it, to think about the story that lived within the frame, and possibly, a story that resisted framing. Was there a story that perhaps lived outside the edges? I grew uncomfortable with this task for it was unlike any graduate course that I knew. Thinking back to the title of the course, I wondered when they would begin to teach me about life in the elementary classroom. Swiftly disregarding the personal practical knowledge that I held as a teacher, I wanted knowledge from these professors in the familiar comfortable way that I had been taught in many other courses. I was comfortable just to have knowledge "passed down" to me.

After careful thought, I finally chose a photograph of my mother and me in front of our Fish and Chip shop in England. [1] In the picture, I was about four years old. I looked like I wanted to shrink into my stroller. My mother was smiling, somewhat protectively leaning over me. Why was I drawn to this picture? At first I did not know. Trying to recollect my reasons for why I chose that photograph, I realize that I did think it was funny how I was as a child contrasted with the ways people knew me now as a more sociable, outgoing adult. In the way people know me, I believe they see little trace of the shy, little girl even when I try to tell them otherwise. As I engaged in this telling of my story, I realized that I was beginning my narrative autobiography.

---

[1] See Chapter 3 titled, "My Stories…no *our* Stories" for a more detailed account of this narrative.

Coming to the Classroom Study

In the spring of 2006, Dr. Jean Clandinin informed me that she and her colleagues Janice Huber, Anne Murray Orr and Shaun Murphy had been awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research grant for a multi-site study entitled, *A Narrative Inquiry into Children's and Teachers' Curriculum Making Experience in an Achievement Testing Era.* As Jean knew of my engagement in narrative inquiry from my earlier work as a research assistant with her, she invited me to undertake my master's study in the context of the larger study. I agreed and collaboratively we worked to obtain ethics consent for the larger study through the Ethics Board of the Faculty of Education. We also worked to obtain both verbal and written permission from both the administrator and the school district to be in a classroom site for the larger study. The consent and ethics approved for the larger study covered my inquiry for my master's study.

Methodology

Narrative Inquiry

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they are and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experiences of the world are interpreted and made personally meaningful (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.375).

Through this metaphor, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind us that narrative inquiry is "both phenomena under study and a method of study" (p.4). They describe narrative inquiry as:

> The study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p.375).

As I attended to the stories "lived and told" of my life and of my participant's lives, I was guided by Connelly and Clandinin's metaphorical three dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2007). They describe this inquiry space as composed of personal and social dimensions (interaction), temporal dimensions (past, present, future), and place dimensions (situation) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.50).

Coming to the Research Participants

The school where I focused my inquiries was in an urban multicultural community. I was afforded the opportunity to position myself as a participant-observer where I lived alongside children for ten months in the 2006-2007 school year. Working alongside other teacher-researchers in a grade three classroom, I focused on building relationship with all the children in the first few months of school. For my part of the larger study, I invited one child and her mother to participate. During the period leading up to the first parent-teacher conferences in early November, I focused my inquiry on a

Korean child and her mother who were newly immigrated to Canada. To assist with the translation of written communication and conversations, I obtained the assistance of a Korean professor, Dr. Ji-Sook Yeom. I describe my work with this child and her mother in chapter two.

From Field to Field Texts to Interim and Final Research Texts

Relationship is a primary aspect of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My immersion in the classroom throughout the 2006-2007 school year allowed for the creation and collection of detailed field texts (data) as I lived alongside the children. Positioned in the classroom environment as a teacher-researcher, I had the opportunity to engage in sustained conversation with my participants. Working alongside the children provided rich opportunities for field texts to emerge. Because my study was part of the larger study, another graduate student and Jean Clandinin also composed field texts and we shared our field texts with each other so that we had a richer source of material to work with. Field texts included field notes on classroom events, transcripts of one-on-one conversations, and field notes on small group conversations as well as on whole classroom discussions. Artifacts such as the children's written work, artwork, photography work, and school documents were also part of the field texts as they provided a place to begin conversations.

I held four audio-taped conversations with the mother. During these conversations, Dr. Yeom was the translator. Written communication and conversations were translated back and forth into English and the Korean language. I had four audio-taped conversations with the child participant. I had the opportunity to sustain

conversations with this child and her mother over the summer months as well as into the following 2007-2008 school year.

In preparation for writing the papers, the transcripts of these conversations, field notes about the child and work samples and documents were read and re-read in order to compose interim research texts which were shared with the child and her mother. These interim research texts were shaped into the co-authored paper (chapter 2), which was also shared with the participants. This sharing helped to ensure appropriate representation, collaboration, and mutual understanding of the story fragments told and experienced through the inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) remind us of the importance of this relational and collaborative aspect of narrative inquiry as they write about their relational living alongside of participants. They write,

> We found that merely listening, recording and fostering participant story telling was both impossible (we are, all of us, continually telling stories of our experience, whether or not we speak and write them) and unsatisfying. We learned that, we too, needed to tell our stories. Scribes we were not; storytellers and story livers we were. And in our storytelling, the stories of our participants merged with our own to create new stories, ones that we have labeled collaborative stories. The things finally written on paper (or,perhaps on film, tape, or canvas), the researcher paper or book, is a collaborative document; a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participant (p.12).

Theoretical Frameworks

In what follows, I describe the theoretical frameworks that are used in each chapter.

Chapter 2: The Interwoven Stories of Teachers, Families, and Children in Curriculum Making

This chapter builds on more than 20 years of research in which Clandinin and Connelly studied teachers' knowledge, professional contexts and identity making (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1999; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Clandinin and Connelly's research program began with a focus on understanding ways teachers held and created knowledge. As this work grew, it shifted to include a focus on the complex intersections of teachers' children's and families' lives as they meet in schools (Clandinin et al., 2006; Murphy, 2004; Murray Orr, 2005; Pearce, 2005). Children and parents were also understood as holders and makers of knowledge which shaped a curriculum of lives (Clandinin et al., 2006; Pushor, 2001), a curriculum co-composed in the meeting of children's, family members' and teachers' lives in a school milieu and through interactions with mandated subject matter (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Schwab, 1969, 1973).

Chapter two is part of research undertaken in a larger research project (Clandinin, Huber, Murray Orr, Murphy, 2006) focused on the tensions shaped as the diverse lives of teachers, children and families bump up against one another and with dominant institutional narratives of mandated testing. Co-authoring this chapter with Dr. Jean Clandinin, we engaged in inquiries in the midst of competing institutional narratives. We attended to how parents' experiences, their ways of knowing, and their hopes shape

their relationships with their child on in and out of school places (Mitton, 2008). In this chapter we inquire into the intergenerational stories (Young, 2005) lived and told by one parent and her daughter newly arrived in Canada and one teacher-researcher as they bumped up against the planned and mandated curricula (Aoki, 1993) negotiated in a Canadian classroom. We end with exploring the importance of attending to children's and teachers' stories of school, parents' stories of their children, and parents' own stories of school in creating a curriculum of lives.

Chapter 3: My Stories...no our Stories

Chapter 3 is an account of a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that attends to children, teachers', and parents' narratives of experience situated within institutional, cultural, and social narratives shaping particular school contexts. Guiding my study is Clandinin and Connelly's (1988, 1992) conceptualization of curriculum making as dynamically enacted by teachers and children at the intersection of four curriculum commonplaces of teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu (Schwab, 1962). In this way, curriculum making is shaped by an individual's stories to live by (a narrative conceptualization of identity) as they bump up against dominant stories of school and school stories. Clandinin, Huber, Huber, Murphy, Murray Orr, Pearce and Steeves (2006) describe school stories as the "ongoing stories composed by teachers, children, families, administrators, and others as they live their lives in school" (p 7). Stories of school are "Stories composed by others and told to others about what the school is about" (p.7).

In this chapter, I focus on my and my mother's lived and told stories and the tensions we experienced as our stories to live by bump up against stories of school and school stories (Clandinin, et. al., 2006). This chapter, an autobiographical narrative inquiry, invited me to reflect on who I am as a teacher, a researcher and a daughter. As the inquiry grew, so too did my understanding of curriculum making, in relation to, and with, the diverse lives of children in my classroom.

Drawing upon Clandinin and Connelly's metaphor of a professional knowledge landscape, this landscape is shaped by my personal practical knowledge as I shared my stories and my mother's stories. Composing my life on the professional knowledge landscape marked moments of tension for me as a teacher. I found myself moving in between spaces in what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described as the "back and forward" direction of temporality (past, present, and future) and the inner and outer direction of the personal and social. Guided by this three-dimensional inquiry space, I composed and recomposed stories of my earlier landscapes growing up in England and then moving to a series of small, rural communities in Canada. I shared my mother's experiences of these earlier years as she lived alongside me. Weaving our intergenerational stories, I grew mindful of how my mother's experiences and her ways of knowing shaped, and were shaped by, our relationship on in and out of school places (Mitton, 2008).

References

Aoki, T. (1993). Legitimating lived curriculum: Towards a curricular landscape of multiplicity. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 8(3), 255-268.

Clandinin, D.J., Steeves, P., Chung, S. (2007). Creating narrative inquiry spaces in teacher education. In Johnston, B. & Walls, K. (Eds). *Voices and Vision in Language TeacherEducation; Selected Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Language Teacher Education* (CARLA Working Paper Series),pp.17-33. Minneapolis University of Minnesota, The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, S., Murray Orr, A., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. New York: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F. M. (1998). Asking questions about telling stories. In C.Kridel (Ed.), *Writing educational biography: Explorations in qualitative research.* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. (pp.245-253).

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1992). Teacher as curriculum maker. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum*, pp. 363-401). Toronto: Macmillan.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. Green, G. Camilli & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (3rd ed. pp. 375-385). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19(5)*, 2-14.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mitton, J. (2008). *A Narrative inquiry into children's and families' lives in classroom curriculum making*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Murphy, M. S. (2004). *Understanding children's knowledge: A narrative inquiry into school experiences*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Murray Orr, A. (2005). *Stories to live by: Book conversations as spaces for attending to children's lives in schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Pearce, M. (2005). *Community as relationship: A narrative inquiry into the school experiences of two children*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Pushor, D., & Murphy, B. (2004). Parent marginalization, marginalized parents: Creating a place for parents on the school landscape. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 50(3)*, 221-235.

Pushor, D. (2001). *A storied photo album of parents' positioning and the landscape of schools*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Schwab, J. (1973). The practical 3: Translation into curriculum. *School Review*, 81, 501-522.

Schwab, J. (1962). The teaching of science as enquiry. In J.J. Schwab and P.F. Brandwein (Eds.), *The teaching of science* (pp.152). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schwab, J. (1969). The practical: A language for curriculum. *School Review*, 78(1), 1-23.

Vinz, R. (1997). Capturing a moving form: Becoming as teachers. *English Education*, 29 (2), 137-146.

Young, M. (2005). *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a good way: A narrative inquiry into language as identity*. Winnipeg: Pemmican.

Chapter 2: The Interwoven Stories of Teachers, Families, and Children in Curriculum Making[2]

A Sense of the Whole

> Human lives are not pieces of string that can be separated out from a knot of others and laid out straight. Families are webs. Impossible to touch one part of it without seeing the rest vibrating. Impossible to understand one part without having the sense of the whole (Setterfield, 2006, p.59).

Setterfield's quotation calls us to consider the complex interconnections when lives meet or become interwoven. Positioned as we are, as teachers and researchers in schools, we see our lives and our families' lives as interwoven with children's lives, their family's lives, and teachers' and administrators' lives. These intertwined, fluid sets of lives seem to ripple and shift as they bump against social, cultural and institutional narratives. Setterfield's words illuminated a frame for inquiring into the lives being composed in one elementary classroom, in one school, in the 2006-2007 school year.

We began this narrative inquiry[3] with research puzzles around children's experiences both in and out of school. As we attended to children's lives we, necessarily, attended to the stories they 'lived and told" (Clandinin et.al, 2006). We wondered about how teachers experienced making curriculum attentive to the diverse lives of children within achievement focused stories of school.

---

[2] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication. Chung, S., & Clandinin, D.J.(in press). The interwoven stories of teachers, families and children in curriculum making. *Learning to Listen to Families in Schools*. (9).

[3] The study is funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada grant to D. J. Clandinin, J. Huber, M. S. Murphy and A. Murray Orr.

During our inquiry, we awakened to some of our assumptions about the lives of children and their families[4]. We became attentive to the gaps and silences in children's and families' "lived" and "told" stories of school as they bumped against our teacher stories (Clandinin et al, 2006). Attending to ourselves in relation with children and families helped us see how they often experienced school and classroom landscapes[5] as places of tension. Our research puzzles became a journey of unknowing and knowing (Vinz, 1997) through which we awakened to the need to attend to the diverse voices and lives of families, too often absent in schools[6].

As we noticed the way we, as teachers, are often busy with our sights on the "planned" curriculum, blurring our vision of the "living" curriculum (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Aoki, 1993), we wondered how children's and families' stories were given space in curriculum making in schools[7]. If children and teachers are co-composing curricula of lives, in what ways does each child's family's stories become

---

[4] Chung's stories unexpectedly became interwoven with a child's and her family's story. In a graduate course, Chung began an autobiographical narrative inquiry by telling and retelling stories of her life as a young child who immigrated to Canada with her family, as a daughter, a teacher, and a graduate student (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007). At the same time as Chung undertook her inquiries, we lived alongside children and their families in the classroom. Inevitably, Chung found herself metaphorically laying her stories alongside those of other immigrant children who also searched to belong as their living curriculum bumped against their hopes and expectations to excel in a mandated curriculum.

[5] The elementary school in which the study was undertaken was positioned in an urban, upper middle-class community composed of children from multicultural backgrounds. In the 2006-2007 school year, we lived alongside children from a grade three classroom; a year when the children have their first set of provincially mandated standardized tests.

[6] Vinz (1997) suggests the practice of "shifting valances of dispositioning" (p. 145) in which educators move between "unknowing, giving up present understandings (positions) of our teaching to "not knowing" to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty (p. 139).

[7] In our view, we are a "living" curricula, not a curriculum laid out by mandates and plans, but, rather, one composed of lived and told experiences. This view of curriculum as one composed as children's and teachers' lives meet in the nested milieu of classrooms, schools, and communities around particular subject matters allows us to notice complexities not always visible.

part of this co-composition? By listening more closely to each child's and each family's lived and told stories, might we better understand the tensions children and families experience in curriculum making[8]?

In this chapter, we focus on one child, newly arrived to Canada, and her mother's lived and told stories and how these stories shaped the in-classroom curriculum making as well as how the in-classroom curriculum making shaped the lives of this child and her mother.

Vibrations on the Web

Entomologists tell us that a spider feels every vibration on its web (Zabludoff, 2006; Mason, 1999; Preston-Mafham, 1991). Revisiting Setterfield's metaphor, we imagine a child and their family as webs and we realize that when we touch one part of a child's life, we set off vibrations in the rest of the family. Necessarily, when the family touches their child, the child's life vibrates into classroom curriculum making. In this view, we see the place of families in curriculum making in new ways.

Too often when we think of curriculum making, we think about the lives of the children and the teacher, lives that are visible. Setterfield's notion of family webs helps us think about what is invisible. Could it be that even though we do not usually see families' stories, they create vibrations in our classroom curriculum making? We wonder, if like a spider, a child feels every spiraling vibration from its' family web, and

[8] Our work is situated with Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) understanding of school landscapes with in-classroom and out-of- classroom places on school landscapes. We imagine landscapes, not as static sites in which people's "stories to live by" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1999), their identities, are fixed, but rather as temporal places which shape and are re-shaped by those who live within them.

conversely, the vibrations that bounce off a child shake the family web to its core? By attending to our unfolding, narrative inquiry[9] research puzzles, we were awakened to the importance of asking and listening more closely to not only children's and teachers' stories, but families' stories.[10]

By making spaces for family stories, we attend to how one mother's lived and told stories shape her relationship with her child on both in- and out-of-classroom places as well as out- of-school places. We notice resonating vibrations in a child's web when we attend to her family's stories[11]. Setterfield (2006) wrote, "I shall start at the beginning. Though of course the beginning is never where you think it is…Our lives at the start are not really our own, but only the continuation of someone else's story…" (p. 58-59).

Setterfield draws attention to how we are always in the midst of living and telling the stories of our lives and that our lives are always composed in relation to family and cultural stories. As we moved from field texts to research texts, we composed fragments of a child's story and her family stories as they vibrated against each other without clear beginnings or ends, but rather, as story fragments "lived and told"

---

[9] Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe narrative inquiry in terms of a three dimensional inquiry space with dimensions of sociality, temporality and place. By inward, they mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, they mean toward the existential conditions, the environment. By backward and forward, they refer to temporality past, present and future (p. 50).

[10] Our inquiry puzzle begins with sharing lived and told stories of the experiences of a young child who recently immigrated to Canada. As our inquiry unfolds, we begin to understand these stories as interwoven and intergenerational (Young, 2005). We also inquire more deeply into this child's mother's stories of her own schooling and her daughter's stories of school as they bump against the planned and lived curricula.

[11] Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which their experience of the world enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477).

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)[12]. We show how these fragments bump against other stories in the family web, creating complex vibrations that touch the child's life, her family's life, the teacher's life, and other children's lives in the classroom.

Story Fragment 1: So Korean

As Chung engaged in conversation with Elizabeth's mother[13] in the fall, 2006, Mrs. Han, who had begun to feel comfortable with telling stories to Chung, told stories of Elizabeth as well as stories of her own uncertainties. Mrs. Han fiddled with her hands as she nervously told our translator[14],

> I don't know if you want to listen to this story or not…Elizabeth had a bit of a problem with a friend in her classroom. This child gave Elizabeth a hard time on how she dresses, talks and how she behaves, all kinds of things (Recorded Conversation, March 7, 2007).

The friend, also Korean, was born in Canada whereas Elizabeth immigrated to Canada. Mrs. Han described how Elizabeth went home crying that day as the other child told her that she "talked funny" and should not act "so Korean" but more like everyone else (Recorded Conversation, March 7, 2007). Through telling the story, which strained

[12] Narrative inquiry consists of being in the field, writing field texts (data), and composing research texts. A variety of field texts were constructed and collected for this study: oral histories, memory box items, photographs, student and teacher generated documents, transcripts of individual conversations with children, parents, and teachers, and field notes.

[13] In order to protect the privacy of each participant, pseudonyms have been used to ensure anonymity.

[14] Mrs. Han spoke very little English so a Korean translator (Dr. Ji-Sook Yeom) was present during our conversations.

their family web, Mrs. Han began to fill in gaps in Chung's ways of knowing this family. Attending differently, Chung realized Elizabeth was now dressing more like the other children (Field notes, November 5, 2006). Rather than wearing her unique clothing from Korea, Elizabeth now wore clothing purchased locally. Chung, intrigued by Elizabeth's new style choices, asked her why she wore her jeans with one pant leg rolled up. Elizabeth shrugged as she stated she did not know why, only that she had seen others wearing their pants like that. Chung now understood why Elizabeth had given her a "cover" story.

Mrs. Han's voice was barely audible as she described how she confronted the other child's mother, who responded, "This is Canada, but same in Korea." The other child's mother explained that, similar to Korea, teachers and families see the children differently according to how much money the family has. She said people judge others by "how they dress" (Recorded Conversation, March 7, 2007) and said that she agreed with her daughter's advice to Elizabeth, as they, too, being Korean in a predominately affluent "white" community, were also learning to fit in. Her daughter was helping Elizabeth fit in. Still shaken, Mrs. Han wondered if her Korean friend was right. She asked Chung if this was true in Canada (Recorded Conversation, March 7, 2007). For Elizabeth and her mother, Elizabeth's living curriculum was fore-grounded.

While the thin threads in a spider web may appear fragile, entomologists noted, "Spider's silk is stronger than any other natural fibre. It is stronger than steel and stretchier than nylon or rubber" (Facklam, 2001, p.8). What could have been overlooked or seen as small vibrations between her and her friend, marked an important moment of tension for Elizabeth as she questioned who she was, and perhaps who she could be,

while she negotiated her living curriculum alongside her peers. These vibrations gained momentum as they touched those she loved. Attending to the vibrations in these family stories, we began to see the threads that connect the two mother's stories. Elizabeth is told how to dress and behave in school by another child. She then tells her mother who speaks to the other child's mother. These family stories, in turn, vibrate forward to the children, and their stories of who they are. The children's stories vibrate onward, and shake the classroom's living curriculum.

We wondered about the interconnections between these families' webs. Like a child and her family, we might think of a spider and its web as solitary. However, on occasion, spiders build webs together in the same area and these webs may be connected (Bailey, 1997).

Attending to interconnected spiders' webs, we expanded the possibilities for the metaphor. If we look at children and families as part of their own family webs and as possibly threaded together with other children's families' webs, we imagined how strong these collective vibrations might be within families and between families. As we traced through the threads of stories, traveling forward and backward among a child's stories, Mrs. Han's stories, another mother's and child's family stories, these vibrations become visible.

Story Fragment 2: A Bouquet of Flowers

It was the week of Thanksgiving when Elizabeth secretly handed Chung a gift with a card attached. The card, with no words on the cover, was illustrated with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. Elizabeth shyly told Chung it was from her mother.

Dear Teacher,

I appreciate that you always look after my daughter, Elizabeth, with love. Since the first day of school she has enjoyed everything with pleasure. Because she has come to Canada not even a year ago. She would have some problems with English and with Canadian Culture. Please understand that and Elizabeth and I will do our best to help her to get along with it well. I always hope to see you at school someday, but due to my lack of English, my cares weigh heavily on my chest. I feel sorry that although I'd like to see you at school, my lack of English makes me worried. I wonder if Elizabeth doesn't bother you during classes (Mrs. Han's letter, October 8, 2007).

When Chung finished reading the card, Elizabeth explained how her mother asked a Korean neighbor to translate and write this letter in English. Chung began to understand how important it was for Mrs. Han to connect with her, to share her fears and hopes for her daughter. She found herself shifting backwards and forwards between the stories she had initially "told" of Elizabeth and her mother. Chung was surprised to hear that Mrs. Han felt tension about who she and her daughter were on the school landscape. For Chung this contradicted her story of seeing Mrs. Han on the first day of school. Before dropping Elizabeth off in the classroom, she smiled at Chung and they bowed politely to one another. Now Mrs. Han's words on the card interrupted Chung's first stories of her as she began to wonder more deeply about the other stories Elizabeth and her mother lived by.

Chung felt compelled to respond to Mrs. Han, a mother who cared so deeply about her child. She realized Mrs. Han wanted to be visible in composing the classroom curriculum. Chung writes,

> Dearest Mrs. Han,
>
> I am so touched by your words and acts of kindness. You are too generous and do not need to give me anything as the best gift is having Elizabeth in my class. Elizabeth is doing so well in grade three, you do not need to worry about her. Elizabeth is an excellent student. She is loving, helpful, hardworking, and kind. I could not ask for a more thoughtful student as Elizabeth always puts a smile on my face. I wish I could speak Korean because you are so lovely. Thank you again for your gift. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and Chusok day. Elizabeth told us all about this special holiday.
>
> Always,
>
> Simmee (Chung's letter, October 9, 2007).

Story Fragment 3: Living a Presence of Being Korean

When Chung first met Elizabeth, her thoughts were ones in which she admired Elizabeth's strength. Chung recalled the first day of school when Elizabeth bounded into class holding her mother's hand. Elizabeth excitedly waved goodbye to her mother. She was struck by how grown up Elizabeth was in a tailor-made coat covering a plaid dress. Chung remembered commenting on her outfit and Elizabeth confidently responded that her outfit was from Korea, where she was from. As Chung got to know her, she marveled

at how she took the initiative to bring in various collections of Korean dictionaries and information books which complimented classroom resources. In the first month of school, Elizabeth even participated in a school-wide traditions writing task and wrote two pages about a special Korean moon festival called Chusok celebrated every October (Field notes, October 20, 2006). She volunteered to read it aloud to her classmates.

Elizabeth explained to the class that she and her mother wrote it together. Her mother described the tradition and Elizabeth translated it in to English. Elizabeth told Chung they wanted other people to learn about their Korean traditions (Field notes, October 11, 2006). Chung continued to be fascinated by what she saw as Elizabeth's courage. Once, on a field trip, Elizabeth offered Chung a homemade Korean sushi roll that she brought as lunch. As they ate together, Chung noticed other children staring at Elizabeth's lunch. Elizabeth munched happily on her seaweed snack and didn't seem to notice the stares (Field notes, November 1, 2006). Chung wondered how Elizabeth and she were so different for, when she was a little girl, she hid her culture and heritage. Chung did not dare eat authentic "smelly" Chinese food at school, nor did she choose to share her heritage with her classmates.

During one art lesson as the children studied Van Gogh, Elizabeth brought in a Korean version of a book about Van Gogh and excitedly translated the book to English so her classmates could understand. A classmate asked if Elizabeth could read it aloud in Korean and she did. Some classmates were in awe as she read (Field notes, December 15, 2006). Chung thought she and Elizabeth lived out very different stories as children who immigrated to Canada. Elizabeth seemed to be a confident, carefree child with little tension and few worries in her life.

One snowy recess Chung began to see herself in Elizabeth's lived stories. Elizabeth asked if she could read an information book about space, the topic of study in language arts, outside. Chung thought it a strange request to bring a book outside given the cold. Most children opted to make snow angels. Elizabeth explained she wanted to get an A in language arts so she was learning as much as she could about space (Field notes, December 6, 2006). Chung agreed to Elizabeth's request and later, when Chung was outside walking with the children, she noticed Elizabeth sitting by herself, clutching the book in her bare hands. Concerned, Chung asked another student to bring Elizabeth some gloves. As Chung looked at Elizabeth with her nose pressed against the book, she began to retrace her own memories of herself as a little girl. She wondered if there could be multiple and more complex plotlines in Elizabeth's life. Chung recalled she, too, had wanted to belong, to fit in, not to stand out. As a child, she found solace by immersing herself in books, imagining herself in other worlds, imagining what could be otherwise (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007). Chung began to see how Elizabeth and she were not so different after all.

Story Fragment 4: Tensions on the Web

A spider can sense the impact and struggle of its prey by the vibrations transmitted throughout the web. It can feel every strain and irregular vibration in its web (Zabludoff, 2006). We wonder if a child, like a spider, is also acutely aware of every vibration and tension pulling on each interwoven thread in his/her life. As we listened to children's stories, teachers' stories, and family stories, we began to understand the

importance of attending to all tensions and vibrations that may impact a child's and their family's lives.

Around Christmas time, the children composed letters to Santa Claus. Chung found herself traveling back to a familiar childhood landscape as she read Elizabeth's letter. Elizabeth wrote,

> I don't know what I want. But the first thing that I want is for my family to come to Canada because everybody in my class has their family in Canada (Elizabeth's Santa letter, December 5, 2006).

Chung reflected on the landscape on which Elizabeth lived, a landscape similar to hers. Chung and her family, too, once had to leave a homeplace. She could feel Elizabeth's words in her letter. Chung began to listen more closely in the classroom as Elizabeth revealed many stories about aging grandparents, cousins, and close friends who still lived in Korea. She longed for her extended family to be living in Canada. Chung understood how Elizabeth felt for, she, too, had once longed for her extended family to be close by. Elizabeth wrote the following letter to Chung at Christmas:

> Thank you Ms. Chung for teaching me and loving me. I want to be like you because you are smart. Have a Happy Christmas! Ask Santa if he has a good present for you. P.S. Be healthy. Your Friend, Elizabeth (December 22, 2006).

Chung was surprised as she read that Elizabeth wanted to be like her for she wished she had been as brave as Elizabeth when she was a little girl. Revisiting

Setterfield's words, "Impossible to understand one part without having the sense of the whole" (2006, p.59), we are reminded that we cannot fully understand a child without listening to the interconnected vibrations of her life in the context of her family. Chung found herself thinking about their stories lived and told as immigrant children as well as the stories of her own mother for Chung's mother had also felt the vibrations as they bumped against stories of school and school stories. When Chung was four, her family immigrated to Canada from England in hopes for greater opportunity. Over Chung's childhood, her family transitioned to three small rural communities, each time opening and closing a Chinese restaurant. In every town, Chung remembers being the only Chinese family. She remembers moments of tension in her childhood as she struggled to fit in and make sense of who she was. Chung recalls her mother's anxieties and worries for her. Now, recollecting her childhood stories and her mother's stories, Chung wondered if the tensions in her family web were similar to the ones Elizabeth and her mother felt.

Story Fragment 5: Naming the Tensions on the Web

Chung gathered the children in the classroom sharing corner. Acknowledging the diversity within her classroom, Chung read the children her new favourite book, *The Name Jar* (Choi, 2003). On the cover is a picture of a Korean girl staring into a jar filled with names written on pieces of paper. The story began with the little girl, Unhei, reluctantly saying goodbye to her grandparents at the airport in Korea as she leaves for North America. Wiping away Unhei's tears, her grandmother gives her a tiny pouch, which held a wooden block carved with a Korean character. "Your name is inside," her

grandmother tells her. As Chung read the book, Elizabeth inched closer, at one point even reaching out to touch a page. Afterwards, Chung and the children engaged in a discussion about whether or not the main character should have kept her Korean name, a name others found difficult to pronounce, or have taken a common English name (Field notes, April 18, 2007).

Many stories about belonging were told by the children that day. Elizabeth revealed her name was not Elizabeth at all, it was Ji-Sook[15]. Shortly after reading the book, Elizabeth wrote a note to Chung, "Well I didn't pick my English name so I just want to be called my Korean name (Ji-Sook) (Field notes, April 18, 2007). Ji-Sook proudly shared that, on her mom's side of the family, all children's names end in Sook and their last name goes in the front. As Elizabeth explained this, Chung recalled wondering when she first saw Elizabeth's report card with the name Ji-Sook. Initially, she had not questioned why Ji-Sook went by an English name as Chung's parents had also changed their names in order to belong in Canada. Accepting the silence at that time, Chung had not thought to ask why, for she made assumptions as she forwarded her own stories of belonging.

The day after reading the book, Chung had another research conversation with Mrs. Han. She asked Mrs. Han if she had heard about Elizabeth wanting to use her Korean name. Mrs. Han told Chung that when Elizabeth came home the day before she said, "Oh mom, I just don't like my name, Elizabeth." In response, Mrs. Han firmly told her daughter that everybody wants that name; she was named after English royalty. As

---

[15] When we learned of the significance of Elizabeth's Korean name, we began to use her English name and Korean name interchangeably. Ji-Sook is a pseudonym we chose to represent Elizabeth's Korean name. We wanted to honour the contributions of Dr. Ji-Sook Yeom, our Korean translator who was an integral part of our relational ways of knowing this child and her mother.

Elizabeth debated with her mother, Mrs. Han stated, "So that's a good name and you'll be a good person. I think about it a lot when I give you that name" (Recorded Conversation, April 20, 2007). Elizabeth settled by agreeing with her mother.

After Chung listened to Mrs. Han's account of the conversation, she asked how she would feel if Ji-Sook still wanted to use her Korean name. Mrs. Han said she wanted her daughter to be "common" and "the same as other children" (Field notes on conversation, April 20, 2007). Chung and Mrs. Han shared more stories as they wondered about what belonging could mean. Mrs. Han began to realize how brave and strong her daughter was to want to use her Korean name. She wondered if it connected Ji-Sook to their culture. Chung shared her experiences of inclusion as a child immigrating to Canada and how she once felt that belonging meant being like everyone else. Chung and Mrs. Han came to a shared appreciation of Ji-Sook's strength as she struggled to hold on to her Korean name, a name that gave a story of who she was. Chung told Mrs. Han that Ji-Sook was a special little girl who stood out. Standing out, being different, is good. As Simmee said this, Mrs. Han smiled and nodded (Field notes on recorded conversation, April 20, 2007).

Chung later spoke to Ji-Sook while they were playfully making outfits for Ji-Sook's teddy bears. Not knowing the earlier conversation Chung had with her mother, Ji-Sook shared that she felt very sad when she arrived home after thinking about *The Name Jar* (Field notes on conversation, April 20, 2007). The book reminded Ji-Sook of leaving Korea and her family. She felt particularly sad about the airport scene at the beginning of the book. Chung asked Ji-Sook if she wanted everyone to call her by her Korean name,

Ji-Sook: I don't care what I'll be called. Uh just, it doesn't really care for me.

Chung: So a name isn't really important to you? So how come yesterday you told me that you wanted them to call you Ji-Sook?

(Recorded Conversation, April 20, 2007).

As Chung reflected, she understood the tensions Ji-Sook was experiencing around using her Korean name. Although Ji-Sook previously shared with her classmates the tensions around her name, Chung wondered if Ji-Sook would feel comfortable sharing the tensions that occurred between her and her mother around the name.

We wonder if it is possible or necessary to pinpoint where vibrations first begin, for the vibrations in a web reverberate strongly to every thread, in every direction. As curriculum makers attentive to children's and families' lives, we know, regardless of where vibrations begin, we need to attend to them all. By attending closely to negotiating a curriculum of lives in the classroom, there were safe spaces for the children to engage in inquiry into their stories to live by. However, in safe classroom spaces, the vibrations that began through reading the book and engaging in the discussion left lasting imprints on Ji-Sook's life, vibrating onwards, touching the story of who Ji-Sook is and may become. As Ji-Sook wondered about who she was becoming in choosing to use her Korean name, she bumped against a story her mother wanted for her.

Chung: Do you think that your mom wants you to use an English name?

Ji-Sook: Yeah.

Chung: What do you want?

Ji-Sook: I can't just…my mom. We don't like to be or disagree.

Chung: You said some of the other kids were calling you your Korean name today? Did you like that?

Ji-Sook: Yeah. Kind of they're learning from me and I'll try to learn their names in Chinese or like lots of stuff. So I'm trying to memorize all of them so I can like work on other languages

(Recorded conversation, April 20, 2007).

Ji-Sook's words stayed with us, "I can't just…my mom. We don't like to be or disagree." Although the vibrations were first noticed in the classroom as Ji-Sook identified with the book, these vibrations traveled to touch Ji-Sook's story of who she was and who she wanted to become. Reverberating from her family web of stories to the classroom curriculum making, the vibrations of stories lived and told, inevitably lingered, touching webs of lives.

As spaces were opened in the conversation between Chung and Ji-Sook, Ji-Sook once again began to share stories where she imagined herself and others otherwise. Although her story of "being otherwise" bumped against her mother's story of who Ji-Sook was, Ji-Sook revealed she loved her Korean name and wanted to use it more. While she feared that some people would have difficulty pronouncing Ji-Sook, her Korean name was important to her and she was determined to use it (Field notes, April 20, 2007).

Over the year, we saw Ji-Sook waver between using her English and Korean names. She signed her name Ji-Sook or Elizabeth, depending on how familiar a friend was to her. Ji-Sook was mainly used for those who were closer to her and Elizabeth for

those who still called her Elizabeth. Ji-Sook continued to struggle with what name to use. One day she ripped up a beautiful butterfly title page on which she had written, "By Elizabeth." She re-did the entire assignment, writing instead, "by Ji-Sook" (Field notes, May 22, 2007). Ji-Sook frequently chose to re-read *The Name Jar* during independent reading time (Field notes, June 15, 2007). Each time we saw Ji-Sook with *The Name Jar* in hand, we wondered about the impact it had on her and her mother's lives.

At the end of the year, Chung gave Ji-Sook her own copy of *The Name Jar* as a gift, inscribed,

> Dearest Ji-Sook (Elizabeth),
>
> Ji-Sook, thank you for teaching me about following your dreams and how to be strong. You make me smile every day with your warm heart. I have learned so much about your special Korean culture and I think you are a brave little girl. I think you will change the world with your kindness-you already do. You remind me of this special girl in this book. When you write the book about your life one day, I want to be one of the first people to read it. You and your mother have special stories to tell. Keep dreaming and imagining…Thank you for making everyone feel like they, too, belong.
>
> Love always,
>
> Ms. Chung (June 28, 2007).

Story Fragment 6: Gaps and Silences In and Between Webs

"While I wash dishes, I cry…" (Mrs. Han, 2007).

Mrs. Han's voice quavered as she described her part time job at a fast food restaurant (Recorded conversation, April 20, 2007). In Korea she was a vice-principal of a kindergarten. In Canada, she worked as a dishwasher and sandwich maker. We sensed sadness in Mrs. Han's voice as she shared her and her husband's hopes for their daughter. They came to Canada so Ji-Sook would learn more English. Mrs. Han's eyes lit up as she described how she hoped, one day, to return to Korea where Ji-Sook would attend university and then, eventually, a university in the United States (Recorded conversation, March 7, 2007). She wondered about their decision to come to Canada. She wondered if Korean families do too much for their children. She wondered if she was putting too much stress and pressure on Ji-Sook to succeed.

As we listened, we realized there were more gaps and silences in our knowing of this family web. Mrs. Han continued to fill in the gaps as she described firmly telling Ji-Sook, "Although you work very, very hard there is discrimination because we are strangers in this society." She shared that Ji-Sook cried when she said this and responded, " I can do very well. I will do my best!" (Recorded Conversation, March 7, 2007). Ji-Sook shared her dream of attending Harvard University. Mrs. Han, surprised at her daughter's knowledge, asked how she knew of Harvard. Elizabeth replied, "That is the best University in the world. You trust me; I will work very hard to get into Harvard University" (Recorded Conversation, March 7, 2007). In our inquiry into the tightly interwoven stories in this family web, we saw how each thread vibrated and, inevitably,

touched other threads. Chung found herself returning to the image of Ji-Sook reading a science book outside on a cold winter day. Attending to all of the story fragments, we began to better understand how the family's web of stories was, in part, threaded around dreams of Ji-Sook's academic achievement.

We felt the vibrations, the tensions, as Chung apologized for not being able to talk much to Mrs. Han during the grade three parent information session (Field notes, April 16, 2007). This session, given by teachers, was intended to alleviate parents' and children's anxieties around provincial achievement tests. Mrs. Han shared how she did not want to go to the session because of her lack of English. However, Ji-Sook begged and pleaded, saying "Mom if you don't come, I won't be able to graduate my grade three". Mrs. Han gave in. Ji-Sook was worried that she would "lose information or miss something that other children might know" (Field notes, April 20, 2007). Although Mrs. Han would not understand what was being said at the session, she agreed to attend as she wanted to help her daughter find success in a foreign school landscape.

Mrs. Han shared that, at first, she did not think these government tests were important but her Korean friend told her that usually only the "elite" are well-educated people and are known to do better at these "tests". Resonating in Mrs. Han's mind were her friend's words,"This is the same kind of society as Korea. In Korea we have a lot of gap between the poor families and the rich families. The higher scores are from the "elite" (rich), they are known as the well educated people" (Recorded Conversation, June 29, 2007). Mrs. Han's fears were cemented as the other Korean mother told her that the results of these "tests" in grade three determined children's placement in junior high (Field notes on conversation, June 29, 2007). As Mrs. Han shared this story of tension,

Chung shared her stories of growing up with limited financial resources. Moving through a series of small towns, the last place Chung remembered living with her parents was above their restaurant in a place they would eventually see as a home. Chung's story brought forth tension for her as an educator for she hoped that teachers, like families, would not be judged by their financial status. As Chung and Mrs. Han continued to share their stories, their journey of knowing and unknowing connected their lives.

As we understand family stories as intergenerational and interwoven, we realized it was important to inquire into Mrs. Han's stories of her experiences of school as a child. More silences were revealed. When Chung asked Mrs. Han about her experiences in elementary school and her relationship with her mother, Mrs. Han began to cry as she traveled back to her childhood experiences. Mrs. Han spoke of her stories which ultimately shaped her daughter's curriculum of life in this excerpt from our conversation.

> I grew up in a small country. There was not much competition in academic areas, so if somebody is doing really better than other children, that person is really stands, stands out. When I look at my mother's younger face, my mother is like me. The relationship between my mother and me is like the relationship between me and Ji-Sook. I want my daughter to stand out and my mother was like that to me (Recorded conversation, April 20, 2007).

Mrs. Han tearfully explained that she wished her mother had pushed her more academically because she felt she missed out on opportunities, having only gone to a two year college rather than a four year University. "I tell Ji-Sook to work hard and then later

you choose what you want to be and that's your choice…I don't want her to blame me later" (Recorded conversation, April 20, 2007).

As Mrs. Han unpacked her stories as a little girl, she became mindful of how her storied landscape was affecting her daughter's life. Mrs. Han said,

> One day Ji-Sook came home and then she sighed, 'oh tomorrow is reading test'. I told her to not worry and just be comfortable and you can do your best. Then that night, Ji-Sook threw up everything… (Recorded conversation, April 20, 2007).

Although Mrs. Han had come to new ways of knowing during our time with her, a knowing where she tried to put less stress on Ji-Sook, Ji-Sook still put pressure on herself to succeed. Family stories appear so deeply and tightly woven that, even when we try to loosen the strands, each story in the web continues to reverberate through each child's curriculum of life. We wondered about how the stories of assessment shaped and reverberated through each family's web. We wondered about possibilities in our stories as we shared our hopes. In our conversation with Mrs. Han on the last day of school, she reaffirmed the need for spaces in our lives to re-imagine and to be otherwise.

> Chung: What are your hopes for your daughter?
>
> Mrs. Han: Respect. If people don't listen to you, you cannot have…but if you have reputation or respect then other people will listen to you.
>
> Chung: Is that how you can make a difference?
>
> Mrs. Han: Yes.

Chung: What are your hopes for yourself?

Mrs. Han: I didn't think about that. Here in this country, in this situation, I do not have any room or any energy to think about that hope

(Recorded conversation, June 29, 2007).

A Sense of the Whole: Making Spaces for Families in Curriculum Making

Relational knowing is a primary aspect of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In our inquiry, we were awakened to the importance of listening to family stories as they influenced their child's interactions with the mandated curriculum as well as their unfolding life curriculum. We realized that we needed to be intentional about creating spaces where the interwoven stories of children within their webs of family stories could be told and retold through shared narrative inquiries. In the classroom, we worked together with the children and their families to create what became known as a project in citizenship education (Chung, Clandinin, Mitton & Huber, 2008). In this seven month long narrative inquiry project, children composed annals, took photographs of places and people where, and with whom, they belonged. They also composed photographic symbolic representations of belonging and made collages of who they were and were becoming. Working in small and whole class response groups, the children and we were awakened to the ways family stories were present in classroom curriculum making.

Through attending more closely to one child's story, her mother's story, and other family stories, we learned more about making spaces to co-compose a curriculum of lives. For example, we wondered about the stories of achievement testing that are

shaping stories of school. As we heard in Ji-Sook and her mother's stories, vibrations from these stories can travel backwards to parents' earlier experiences of assessment. In turn, these earlier experiences may vibrate forward to a child's life. We wondered how often parents are caught in their own spaces of tension and, thus, live out their stories through, and with, their children. We wondered about how we could more intentionally create spaces for such stories to be told so that we could understand how assessment could be shifted from assessment of learning to assessment for learning and assessment as learning (Adamson, 2008). These latter ways of thinking about assessment fit more seamlessly within our view of curriculum making.

We remain hopeful that school landscapes can be otherwise as we attend to family stories and begin to make spaces for co-composing a curriculum of lives alongside children, families and teachers. As Mrs. Han and Chung continued to imagine otherwise with one another, Chung responded, "Yes, I think that hope is all we have…"(Recorded conversation, June 29, 2007).[16] To create change in our ways of knowing, we need to attend to all vibrations, especially those that are invisible upon first glance. By listening to the voices of families, we can acknowledge and appreciate the diversity in our classroom webs and in our webs of lives.

By attending to family vibrations lived and told, we can begin to interrupt and re-write dominant stories of school (Clandinin & et. al, 2006). Through listening closely to vibrations within these intergenerational webs of lives, we can co-compose a curriculum in schools where everyone feels like they belong.

---

[16] As the interim research text were composed and shaped into this paper, the stories written were shared with Ji-Sook and her mother. Ms. Han told us how important she believed these stories were for other immigrant families. She also expressed her renewed sense of hope for herself and her daughter.

Chung's conversation with Ji-Sook on the last day of school reminds us of the importance of creating spaces in schools where families can tell and retell, compose their stories in the most important curriculum of all, a curriculum of lives.

> Chung: What are you looking up?
>
> Ji-Sook: Belonging. (She reads the definition in the dictionary). I don't get it. it's too hard the words for me. Just that it takes a long time to think what really belonging means. Like you can't use the dictionary that you could see what belonging means. Can you just figure out what belonging means. Feels like I'm a crazy dictionary.
>
> Chung: Do you think we might just have to figure out what belonging means ourselves?
>
> Ji-Sook: Yeah. *(She sighs, slowly closing the dictionary)*
>
> (Recorded Conversation, June 29, 2007).

References

Adamson, D.G. (2008). *Shifting the professional landscape: Professional development and assessment for learning.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Aoki, T. (1993). Legitimating lived curriculum: Towards a curricular landscape of multiplicity. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 8*(3), 255-268.

Bailey, J. (1997). *How spiders make their webs.* New York. Benchmark Books.

Berger, M. (2003). *Spinning spiders.* New York. Harper Collins Publishers.

Choi, Y. (2003). *The name jar.* New York. Dell Dragonfly Books.

Chung, S., Clandinin, D.J., Mitton, J.,& Huber, J., (2008, May). *Attending to diverse lives in school: Learning from stories of children and families.* Presentation at Learning and Teaching Resources Branch Alberta Education, Edmonton.

Clandinin, D.J., Steeves, P., Chung, S. (2007). Creating narrative inquiry spaces in teacher education. In Johnston, B. & Walls, K. (Eds). *Voices and Vision in Language Teacher Education; Selected Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Language Teacher Education* (CARLA Working Paper Series), pp.17-33. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, S., Murray Orr, A., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers.* New York: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Clandinin, D.J. & Connelly, F.M. (1992). Teacher as curriculum maker. In P. Jackson (Ed.), Handbook of research on curriculum, pp. 363-401). Toronto:Macmillan.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Facklam, M. (2001). *Spiders and their web sites*. New York. Little, Brown and Company.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kalman, B. & Smithyman, K. (2002). *The life cycle of a spider*. Canada. Crabtree Publishing Company.

Mason, A. (1999). *The world of spiders*. Canada. Sierra Club Books.

Pascoe, E. (2002). *How & why? Spiders spin silk*. Milwaukee, WI. Gareth Stevens Publishing.

Preston-Mafham, R. (1991). *Spiders*. London. New Burlington Books.

Setterfield, D. (2006). *The thirteenth tale*. Canada: Bond Street Books.

Vinz, R. (1997). Capturing a moving form: Becoming as teachers. *English Education, 29*(2), 137-146.

Young, M. (2005). *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a good way: A narrative inquiry into language as identity*. Winnipeg: Pemmican.

Zabludoff, M. (2006). *Spiders*. New York. Marshall Cavendish Benchmark.

Chapter 3: My Stories...No, Our Stories[17]

Introduction: Slowly Awakening

As I read and re-read the book, *What You Know First*, I closed the cover, firmly ending my thinking about it or so I thought. Only a few phrases adorned the pages of MacLachlan's (1995) book but somehow her words lingered. The narrative of a child leaving a known and loved place was all too familiar to me. The words on the pages were scarce yet the story was complex. Pondering this story, I began to wonder about my life story and what it was that I knew first. And so I reflected on my first landscapes or what Greene (1995) might describe as my "rememory" of those first landscapes (p.82). Although Greene points out that, "We cannot return to the landscape of those prereflective days," she reminds me of the important process of reflecting on our earlier landscapes for, "We can only become present to them by reflecting on them"(1995, p.72). Therefore, by reflecting on my storied landscapes, I begin to invite new possibilities of being present and aware of my "open-ended selves" in my process of becoming (p.72).

At the beginning, as I conjured up memories of my first landscapes, I found myself thinking "within" the frame as I so often did, seeing my stories as fixed, already written, as if they were "once upon a time." It was not until I began to attend to my stories and listen to others' stories 'lived and told,"[18] that is, to engage in autobiographical narrative inquiry, that I began to see beyond the borders that once confined who I was and

---

[17] A version of this paper has been submitted for publication. Chung 2008. *Learning Landscapes.*

[18]Connelly and Clandinin (1999) see teachers trying to develop a coherent narrative account of themselves in the living and telling of their stories.

who I could become. As this narrative inquiry continued, I eventually attempted to write *my* life stories (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007). Through attending to my unfolding narrative puzzle, I awakened to understand that who I am, and am becoming, is not composed in isolation, nor is it fixed. My stories are both deeply interwoven, and can be re-told and re-lived, with those who live alongside me. Setterfield (2006) calls me to consider the complex interconnections of my life when I see it as interwoven with the lives of others. She writes,

> Human lives are not pieces of string that can be separated out from a knot of others and laid out straight. Families are webs. Impossible to touch one part of it without seeing the rest vibrating. Impossible to understand one part without having the sense of the whole (p.59).

Setterfield's metaphor reminds me that my past, present and future stories are shaped by narratives "lived and told" of all the people in my life. My story does not begin or end with me, for my stories vibrate, touching others' lives, just as theirs touch mine. I have the possibility of shifting and rewriting my "stories to live by"[19] (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.4) in my life web.

---

[19]Connelly and Clandinin's (1999) notion of "stories to live by" refers to a narrative conception of identity, an understanding in which our stories to live by are shaped by secret stories, sacred stories, and cover stories. Our stories to live by are fluid, multiple, and shifting stories, composed and recomposed as they are shaped by the past and present landscapes in which a teacher lives and works. Stories to live by link the concept of teachers' personal practical knowledge and the professional knowledge landscape.

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) and Greene (1995) draw attention to the interwoven, multiplicity of contexts that shape our narratives. Greene writes of recalling the shapes of childhood with reference to her life story. She describes the layers of complexity in life stories that shape and shift who each of us are, and can become, through these words.

> I cannot truly say, "*my* life story." For that would imply that, spiderlike, I have somehow spun a web solely from the stuff of my own being. When, in fact, I cannot exclude the contexts of gender, sibling, and maternal relationships, political and professional phenomena, and even aging and decline from "myself." I am not so "individual" that I can claim to be free from the shaping influence of contexts…"(1995, p.74).

Coming to the Research Puzzle

As I began my narrative inquiry into who I was in my early landscapes, I reflected on my relationships with my parents, siblings, students, colleagues, and teachers. These webs of relationships have shaped who I was, who I am now, and who I am becoming as I compose my personal practical knowledge both on and off my professional knowledge landscapes. The social, institutional and cultural narratives that shape these landscapes also influence who I am and how I teach.

My narrative puzzle began when I returned to the University of Alberta to begin my graduate studies in 2004. Not knowing what to expect, I decided to take a course titled *Life in the Elementary Classroom*, a course taught by Drs. Jean Clandinin and Pam

Steeves. Unknowingly, the safe space created in this classroom and the openings to look inwards and outwards, backwards and forwards, helped me begin to unfold a narrative life puzzle that continues to be composed and re-composed. As I learned to attend more closely to stories lived and told of my personal and professional landscapes, I slowly began to write and re-write my autobiographical narratives (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007). As part of my narrative inquiry, I was encouraged to bring in memory items from my lived stories. One of the first artifacts I decided to bring was a photograph of me and my mother in front of our Fish and Chip shop. At the time, I was not entirely certain why I chose to share this particular picture, but somehow I was drawn to it, compelled to speak to it.

With two colleagues in my "Works in Progress,"[20] I shared fragments of stories during each class. I began with telling them a happy anecdote of my mother and I in a way that implied my story was a fixed entity, already written. At the closure, I all but stated, "the end." At the time, I thought I was finished with that story. I did not realize I was just beginning my narrative inquiry journey. As we listened and responded to each other's stories, the trust between members of my Works in Progress group grew. They began to ask me more questions and I began to awaken to the cover stories and the secret stories[21] (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) I had told.

---

[20] Works in Progress groups are small story groups that remain constant throughout the course in order to enable sustained conversations through listening and responding to each other's stories and writing.

[21] Cover stories are narratives often told to mask secret stories in order to portray and uphold acceptable images of one's life on both on and off school landscapes. Secret stories are told to others in safe places both on and off the school landscapes (Clandinin and et.al, 2006, p.7).

Inquiring more deeply into the stories that lived outside the temporal, social and emotional edges of this photograph, the safe cover story I had shared slowly began to unravel. Deeper, more complex stories hid underneath. As I awakened to the layers of the stories, I felt a tension that momentarily dispositioned[22] me. As I thought about the unraveling of the stories, resonating, for me, were my teachers' words, "Attend to the edges, examine the gaps…the silences." Was this a story I had silenced? Learning to look beyond the edges of this photograph uncovered multiple plotlines to the stories I was telling of my and my mother's, lives. There was a much more complex story being lived as my mother and I negotiated our "living curriculum" whilst living out our "curriculum as planned" (Clandinin, et. al., 2006). The easy, happy anecdote I had first told about the picture of my mother and I was incomplete, resisting framing as our "curriculum of lives"[23] was being co-composed on a multiplicity of landscapes. This "once upon a time" story was not enough. As I moved from multiple tellings of my stories, I began to retell my stories through narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Greene once noted, "No one of us can see the whole or sing the whole." Reflecting on her own childhood landscape, she reminds me that "no one's picture is complete" (Greene as cited in Miller, 1998, p.145). It was in coming to know the necessary "incompleteness" of my mother's and my stories to live by that my narrative inquiry puzzle began.

---

[22] I borrowed this term from Vinz (1997) who suggests the practice of "shifting valances of dispositioning" (p.145) in which educators move between "unknowing", giving up present understandings (positions) of our teaching to "not-knowing; to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty" (p.139).

[23] Clandinin and Connelly (1992) conceptualize curriculum as a course of life, or as a "curriculum of lives." (p.392). A curriculum of lives is shaped as children's and teachers' diverse lives meet and bump up against stories of school and school stories on both in and out of classroom places (Clandinin & et.al, 2006, p.135).

In my narrative search in learning about who I was, who I am, and who I want to be as a teacher and a person, I realized I needed to attend not only to my story, but to my students' stories and to my family's stories. Within these stories are some of the narrative threads that vibrate within my web of life. As I continued to attend to the fragments of my complex, interwoven stories to live by, I found new openings and possibilities that allowed me to attend more closely to my storied life. In order to have any sense of who I was, who I am and who I can become as an educator, a daughter, a learner, a being, I followed Greene's words and began with my earlier landscapes.

The stories I share in this paper are of my earlier landscapes with my family. Although the narrative accounts in this paper were written from my vantage point, they were composed as a result of conversations over time with my mother. My mother's telling of her lived experiences provided me insight into her vantage point. Therefore, in collaboration with my mother, I was able to write family stories grounded in both of our rememories and retellings. As we find ourselves retelling and reliving our stories, our family stories continue to vibrate onward, touching the stories we now live out. Necessarily, these vibrations linger, reverberating into my classroom and who I am and can become as a teacher as I live alongside young children. In this paper, I also share a story of a child I lived alongside. I retell the story of this child in order to show how thinking narratively allowed me to "know" and "unknow" my students in new ways (Vinz, 1997). As I engaged in this narrative inquiry, I found myself revisiting MacLachlan's words, and realized that what I knew first was my mother. In this paper, I shall start with what I know first…

Vibrating Stories

> The narratives we shape out of the materials of our lived lives must somehow take account of our original landscapes (Greene, 1993, p.148).

As I attend closely to the vibrations from my past, I begin to understand that, even as adults, vibrations in our webs of lives can linger…

First Landscapes: The Fish and Chip Shop

My family and I experienced a lot of transitions over the years. We moved from England to Fort Saskatchewan, to Wainwright and then to a little town called Edgerton. We made friends over the years but, in England, it felt like we only had each other. As I dig through my old photographs, I find myself drawn to a picture where my mother was tightly holding my hand. In the background was our small Fish and Chip shop in England. Clinging tightly to my mother's side, I looked like a very scared little girl. I hardly remember the shop but I remember the stories told of it.

I do not recall much of England as I was so young, but I do hold onto memories. I remember pre-school where, like my older siblings, I wore a uniform. I liked my uniform but I did not appreciate the "no nail polish" rule. I remember the crammed mini van our family friends drove us to school in along with their own children. My parents were not able to drive us because they had to work. My mother and my siblings tell me I cried often at pre-school. Sometimes my sister would even be asked by the principal to keep me company. I wonder why I don't remember that? Somehow, my memories paint wonderful pictures of school in England.

I do recall a fire that ignited in our Fish and Chip shop. I cried as we watched it from inside the car. I was certain the fire was an inferno, but when my mother tells this story, she describes it as only a small kitchen fire. I remember the enormous slugs that blanketed the sidewalks whenever it rained and it rained often. Terrified to squish them with my feet, I asked my parents to lift me up. Looking back at who I was in that picture of myself, I still see a little girl who was afraid of so many things in life.

As I find my childhood memories of my life in England are blurred with moments of tension, I seek comfort in listening to the stories my mother tells me of the life we had in England. Her stories describe special moments where we spent family time together. We had three wonderful dogs, Lucky, Brandy, Sam (after my first brother who passed away at birth,) and our cat, who was also named Sam. In this naming, my mother was honouring the life of the brother I never met. My mother especially enjoys telling stories of our occasional trips to London on the train and visits to nearby cities. My mother tells me about a moment of tension where she thought she almost lost me as she was distracted by tending to a friend's child. I wandered onto the busy road in front of the shop. She grabbed me off the curb just before the oncoming traffic went by. I wonder if, from that point on, my mother felt a need to keep a watchful eye on me. She proudly reminds me that when I was a baby, while she worked, she carried me on her back.

Earlier Landscapes: Leaving What I Knew First

My siblings and I spent most of our time at the Fish and Chip shop. In fact, we spent so much time at the shop, it was only fitting that we celebrated our birthdays there. After all, it was home, or so it seemed to me. Although my parents were always very busy

at the shop, my mom went out of her way to get us a customized birthday cake from a boutique bakery. My brother would get cakes that showcased his favourite sports. I remember a detailed soccer field complete with players decorated one of his cakes. My birthday cakes were always in the shape of my age for each year. As I looked at old photographs of me, mesmerized by my cakes, I think I must have loved them. Not long after my fourth birthday, my parents announced that we would be moving to Canada. That year was the last time I remember getting a number cake. At the time, sadness swept in as we had to leave what I knew first as my homeplace.

I didn't understand why we would leave our home. We first came to Canada without my mother. My father, brother, sister and I moved here while my mother stayed behind to sell the Fish and Chip shop. With no home of our own, we lived in the basement of my uncle and his family's home. A new place, so many unknowns, I was scared without my mother by our side. During my mother's absence, my father tried his best. He bandaged our wounds, comforted us, and even brushed our hair, putting it in ponytails or at least attempting to. Eventually, I had to start kindergarten. Kindergarten was another unknown and with so many transitions, I was fearful. My dad had to work so my aunt took me to my first day of school. Carrying me in her arms, my aunt tried to hand me over to the teacher. Refusing to go, I kicked the teacher squarely in her shin. There were many tears to follow that day as I stood on my own with no one to physically carry me. Carrying me with her words, I sought comfort in speaking to my mother every day over the telephone until she eventually joined us in Canada.

With all the movement in our lives, we came to meet and leave many "homeplaces." When we were able to stand on our own as a family, we moved from my uncle's home to several new homes as my parents went wherever opportunity took them. I recall moving to an old rented townhouse in Wainwright. We moved again to a different part of town into the first house we ever owned in Canada. It was not much bigger than a shack. Transitioning once again, we moved to Edgerton where we made a home in a space above the restaurant. My parents moved again, but this time I did not follow for I moved to Edmonton in order to attend a post-secondary institution. My parents moved one more time before settling in where they are now. They live in a small village in Saskatchewan. They bought a small trailer nestled beside their restaurant. On cold winter days, sometimes the rickety old pipes freeze, forcing them to wait for the weather to thaw before they get running water in the trailer.

I recall one cold day when I visited. My mom sighed as she told me how the pipes froze again and the dishwasher was broken. As I woke up early that morning to help my mother open the restaurant, I noticed she was daydreaming. As if in a half sleep, her tacit knowledge artfully guided her in cutting vegetables for the daily soup special. Gazing at my mother, I couldn't help but wonder if this seven days a week, 7 am to 11 pm work days was the life she had imagined for herself.

When I visited my parents again in the summer, my mother suggested I take home some of my childhood keepsakes she had stored in the trailer. The living area of the trailer was crammed with unopened boxes. It was so space deprived; there was not even a couch to sit on. I wondered if my mother had not unpacked because they did not have the

time. Yet I noticed there were some items my mother had taken the time to take out of the boxes. Along the window ledge were some of my childhood sports trophies and my "Most Creative" science fair award. Hanging on the centre of the wall were my siblings' and my grade twelve graduation photos. I couldn't help but wince at the sight of my now, out-dated poofy Cinderella style dress. As I continued to look around the room, I realized my mother had kept every doll and unsightly artifact my siblings and I ever made in school.

Later that day, as I leafed through old photographs laying on the bookshelf, I found my eyes drawn to a single picture, propped up against the shelf. Although the picture was slightly yellowed with age, I could see a beautiful orchid plant. With so many other pictures in the albums, I wondered why my mother had chosen to put this particular flower picture up. The image of this blossoming orchid reminded me of how much my mother loved flowers and gardens. Whenever I saw no life left in a plant I had forgotten to nurture, I would give it to my mother who would revive it back to life.

My mother never had a garden of her own. I'll never forget the day my mother proudly showed me the broccoli that she grew in a little trough she bought. Her eyes lit up as she told me in detail of how she grew her broccoli. Plucking out some pieces of the sprouting greens, she carefully washed them for me to eat. She was so proud of this little patch of soil where she could grow things that I wondered if, perhaps, this was a garden for her. If it was, it was her first garden. The more I have come to learn about my mother, I realize that she is a person who sees much more than a little garden. Every day she spreads seeds that nurture a community, spreading well beyond our family web. At sixty-

eight years old, my mother takes great pride in caring for a local community park. As part of her routine, she carries gallons of water to the plants in the local community park.

As I inquired into these stories lived by my mother, I came to know that she tends not only to her family as she cares for our treasured moments, she also tends to nurturing plants both in her home and in her community. Tending the garden, like her family, she attends not only to her own but also to others.

Blurring Past and Present Landscapes: A Bean Sprout

As time passes and I grow older, I find myself relishing whatever moments I have with my parents. Visiting them occasionally in Saskatchewan, we spend our time together in their home, the restaurant. Suddenly I find myself no longer a teacher, but a waitress happily serving the local patrons that have become more like family than customers to my mother and father. "Ah… so you're the school teacher," they say as I fill their coffee cups. "Your mother is so proud of you. She talks about you." I smile at this as I wonder what other stories my mother tells of me. Proud of me now, I remember there was a time before I became a teacher when she hoped I would take over the family business. I can tell now just how proud she is that I pursued my dream whereas she chose a life that would give her family opportunity.

One year, just before Christmas time, I found myself sitting beside my mother in silent appreciation as she was preparing our dinner at 10:00 in the evening, after the restaurant finally closed for the night. Placing a large bowl full of bean sprouts in front of her, my mother began carefully tearing off the top of the sprout and the tip, leaving only the stem. I grabbed a few bean sprouts and began imitating my mother's actions. After

painstakingly tearing only a handful of stems, I found myself wondering why my mother would take such time and care to do what seemed like such a trivial task. Impatient and tired, I asked my mother, "Why can't we just eat the bean sprouts the way they are?" As my mother leaned over me to redo some of my carelessly torn bean sprouts, she shared a story that not only changed the way I looked at bean sprouts, but, more importantly, reminded me there was a purpose and story to everything my mother does, no matter how small or big it might seem. Not looking directly at me, my mother asked if I knew what my grandmother used to do for a living. I was eager to hear more as my mother always spoke so lovingly of her mother who had passed away from cancer over fourteen years ago. I could tell my mother was proud as she described how my grandmother used to work in different five star restaurants in Hong Kong. Always holding at least two jobs, my grandmother's job was to peel shrimp as well as to tear off bean sprout tips. My mother's eyes watered as she continued to tell the story of my grandmother who raised four children while holding down multiple jobs. As I listened, I began to understand why she took such care in tearing those bean sprouts for it reminded her of her mother. Awakened to new stories of my mother, her mother, that night I continued to tear bean sprouts with my mother until the entire bowl was finished.

Treasured Landscapes: Tattered "Little Sister"

During my usual spring 'clean sweep,' I rummaged through the closet in my Edmonton home to find items to donate to a local charity. I gathered three bagfuls of clothes and, eventually, a bag of stuffed animals, most of them given as gifts throughout the years. The clothes had no sentimental value but parting with my stuffed animals was

difficult. Each animal was a memory trigger of a particular time, person, or place. They were all in excellent condition, well, all but one that is. As I examined my favourite childhood teddy bear, I immediately thought of England. When I was a child, I affectionately named my bear in Chinese, calling it "little sister." Besides photographs, now it was the only artifact I had from my childhood in England. Tattered, with yellow stuffing coming out of its belly, the bear was clearly well loved. It was the only bear I remember having as a child. A stuffed doll and a stuffed rabbit had seen their last days long ago. This last keepsake, my ragged teddy bear, recalled, for me, the security I felt being with my family in England. I knew it was my favourite childhood toy as I had seen countless photographs of me hugging it tightly as a little girl. I spent some time contemplating whether or not I should keep my favourite bear or if I should give it to a child who might enjoy it as much as I had when I was a little girl. Ultimately I decided to let go of my childhood keepsake. After all, being an adult, surely I did not need to hang on to childhood mementos. Putting my precious bear in the bag along with the others, I was certain it would be the last time I would see it.

I had every intention of bringing the bags to a local charity but, admittedly, they ended up sitting in my basement. The bags were beginning to collect dust until one day my mother visited. Seeing the bags labeled "Donations", she asked me if she could give the items to families in need in the small town where she lived. I was not surprised by her thoughtful request, as I knew of all the different ways she took care of people in the community. My mother took the bags with her when she left.

Some months later, I looked up on my closet shelf at the spot where "little sister" used to sit. I found myself suddenly missing my English bear as I thought back to the

fond memories it held for me. As I pondered what might have become of my wonderful bear, a startling realization sat with me. Who on earth would want my tattered teddy bear but me? Imagining my teddy bear being quickly discarded by someone who saw it as old, and unworthy of being given as a gift to a child, I was mortified for I couldn't believe that I had given away my childhood treasure reminding me of a place I once loved.

So much time had passed, I could not even remember what I had done with the donation bags. I was most certain my bear was gone until the day my mother called me. With exasperation in her voice, she first gave me a little lecture on how I throw out everything while she takes care of things. I was relieved when my mother told me that she had found my "little sister" bear among the clothes she took from my basement to donate to families in her community. Apparently she had stitched up my bear's ripped belly and it was as good as new. My mother remembered how special this keepsake was to me and, I think, perhaps to her. When I next saw my mother, she handed me my bear. At first I actually contemplated that it was fate that I was reunited with my bear but I realized that it was not fate at all. It was what Lugones (1987) would call my mother's "loving perception" and, perhaps, her way of reminding me of who I was and where I came from. As I hugged my bear, I felt like a little girl again with my mother coming to my rescue. I clutched my bear tightly in my arms as my mother told me more stories of England. When I was just a toddler, she use to bring me to the fish market at six in the morning in order to get the best produce for our Fish and Chip shop. I laughed as my mother described how I would cry whenever we forgot to bring my "Little Sister" to the market, which was apparently quite often. Even if we had almost reached the market,

my mother and I would turn back to the Fish Shop just to get my teddy bear. As my mother fondly told me this story, I realized that my bear probably meant as much to me as it did to her for it brought her back to a time and a place, reminding her of our times together in England. I think my mother wanted me to remember this.

Reliving, Retelling... in the margins

At the age of eight, I was in grade three. It was the third school I transitioned to during my educational journey. Being an extremely shy student, I hardly ever spoke in class. However, my family tells me that, to their dismay, I had no shortage of words at home. Although I was shy in school, I did attempt to respond whenever the teacher spoke to me, but, unfortunately, my soft voice was often barely audible. I remember always dreading my turn to read as our teacher went up and down the rows beckoning us to read aloud.

Grade three was full of new knowings and unknowings. That year I had my first crush on a boy, learned the multiplication table, and wrote my first set of standardized achievement tests. Being Chinese, I was the only visible minority in my class. There were not very many Chinese people in the school except for my brother, my sister and me. I wanted desperately to "fit in" and be like the other children. I was thankful that I was beginning to lose traces of my British accent which had not helped my attempts to fit in.

As life in grade three went on, I did not realize that it would also be the same year I would be labeled as an ESL, struggling student. I don't recall exactly how I came to earn this 'special' label, but I do remember the feeling I had when I first became

aware that I was labeled as an ESL student and a struggling learner. I was not even aware that English was my second language for it had become the language I was most comfortable with as I was losing my grasp of the Chinese dialect.

Many times I was pulled out of class that year. Whenever I was pulled out for remedial English, I had to go to a small room at the end of the hallway with what seemed like an enlarged sign on the door noting 'Learning Assistance.' As I half-heartedly completed isolated vocabulary exercises and simple board games, I couldn't help but wonder what was wrong with me. Why was I the last to know I was actually a struggling learner? I began to wonder if I should stop reading the intricate novels I loved so much. In 'Learning Assistance' I frequently earned prizes and even a ribbon once for my apparently exceptional efforts. These prizes did not deter me from wanting to scream and shout, "I am not dumb!" every time I was pulled for remedial instruction. Instead, I said nothing. I stayed silent. Although I had developed close friendships with children at this school, I could not help but wonder if my friends might have thought I was dumb too, for I was the only student who was always pulled out of class.

I recall that from an early age, I took solace in books and music. A vigorous reader, I found myself immersing myself in literature where I could imagine my life as otherwise, that is, a life where I was a 'smart' student. It was not until the day that I was given a series of standardized tests that the remedial instruction abruptly stopped. I did not know why it ended but I was elated. Was I cured of my dumbness? Funny, I did not recall feeling smarter. I wondered if perhaps the board games had done wonders after all. I did not dare question why remedial instruction ended for I feared that the teacher might change her mind and send me back. As I progressed through grade school, I was

relieved to not be singled out for anything other than success and accolades. However, the memories and labels of grade three must have unknowingly lingered with me as I grew fiercely determined to show my family, my friends, and my teachers that I was, indeed, a good student, a smart student.

When I was about to enter grade eleven, I transitioned once again to another school. I attended the only school in the village community. After a year in my new school, one day, unexpectedly, the jovial high school principal summoned me over the intercom to go down to his office. I was surprised at this request as I was usually known as a "good" student. Going to the principal's office was uncharted territory for me. To my relief, my principal wanted to know if I wished to review my educational history. I was curious about what was written about me in my file so I readily agreed. As we looked over my file, he wondered why, in grade one, my report card noted that I liked to stay in at recess and read in the corner by myself. My principal found this quite amusing as I had become quite an outgoing student in my later years. Then he marveled how in grade three my reading score in an achievement test was recorded to be three years above grade level. It was the first time I heard this news. I did not know how my memories of this early landscape would linger with me as I continually questioned who I was. Was I an ESL student? Was I a good, smart student? Was I dumb? After nine years and having experienced continued academic success after grade three, I still wondered about the assumptions placed on me as a child. Even as an adult, in my graduate classes, I had silenced this story but it was through this self-facing narrative inquiry that I began to ask myself –why? I wondered how these stories of coming to know myself and who I was vibrated into my teaching.

Vibrating into the Classroom: A Right-Sided Heart

As his mother picked him up to go see the doctor, Vlad, a child in my classroom, made a point of coughing forcefully. Eventually all of his classmates noticed him. They turned round in their desks to look while one asked, "Vlad are you sick again?" In a weary voice, he replied, "Yeah…as usual" (Field notes, October 19, 2006). I remember when I first met Vlad. I thought he was in contention for an Oscar with his frequent theatrical outbursts. Early in the year Vlad had an angry rage over an accidental brush with a classmate during gym class. It took almost an entire afternoon to calm him. Shortly afterwards, Vlad complained about a pain in his chest."My heart hurts," he said as he put his hand over the right side of his chest. "Is my heart here?" he questioned. I gently told him that I thought his heart was on the left side. He was adamant he could feel his heart on both sides (Field notes, October 4, 2006). "What an actor!" I initially thought. Earlier he had been unwavering in his belief that love was not a "need" but only a "want" during a social studies discussion (Field notes, October 24, 2006). But as I thought more about Vlad, I began to wonder about who he was. In that moment, I awakened to how I would come to unknow Vlad; beginning with this unknowing, enabled me to know him. I thought I knew this nine year old boy of Bangladeshi and Anglo heritage. Wasn't he an extremely high achiever and a fierce competitor? I had many labels for how I knew him but I realized that none of these labels helped me know the whole of him. As I learned to attend more closely to Vlad, I began to listen and unknow him, eventually coming to see more of the whole.

During a math test I began to know the layers of complexity in Vlad's life stories. A high achiever, Vlad, a seemingly tough boy who showed little affection to me

or his peers, began his test with what seemed like his usual intent of getting 100%. However, during the test, I noticed Vlad uncharacteristically losing focus. Eventually, Vlad put down his pencil and requested a private conversation with me. His voice quavered as he asked, "Ms. Chung, are people allowed to copy movies?" I asked Vlad why he was worried about this. He shared his worries about the repercussions of what might happen to his father who copied movies. He loved his father and treasured the time he had with him as Vlad traveled back and forth between his mother's house during the week and his father's house on the weekends. I listened to Vlad tell his life story. Afterwards, still worried, Vlad wanted to finish his test. Wiping away his tears, in his usual quest for perfection, Vlad told me of his expectations to get all "As" on his report card. He prided himself on being seen as a 'smart' student. When he completed his test, I was surprised when Vlad, such a private boy, wanted to continue our conversation.

I marveled about how much I learned about who Vlad was on that singular day. That day I let go of my assumptions, my labels. I became a "world traveler" (Lugones, 1987) as I saw the parallels between our stories. Vlad, too, defined himself by his achievements. He, too, was trying to make sense of his dual world, living in between two cultures. I thought about the assumptions and labels I unknowingly placed on him, labels similar to the ones stamped on me as a child. There was so much more about this little boy I needed to know. As we continued our journey of unknowing and knowing ourselves together, more stories came forth. Vlad was an important thread in my life. As Vlad felt safe to share more of his stories, not only with me but his classmates, we all began to know him in beautiful ways. Undoubtedly, as Vlad passionately shared with us his dream of being a researcher who would find a cure for cancer and diabetes (Field

notes, June 6, 2007); I knew there would be more layers to knowing the depths of who Vlad is and who he would become. Labels could never define the whole of him, or the whole of me.

In-between Spaces: Retelling the Stories

I live in the stories of who I am and who I am not. Am I determined through my discourse to be an immigrant child, a struggling ESL student, a good student, or a high achiever? Through inquiring into my narrative puzzle, I came to know that these labels could never encapsulate all that I am and all that I am not. My stories are fluid and ever changing as they move with me through diverse landscapes. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) remind me of the educative significance of seeing stories as necessarily incomplete for they tell us that "People's lives are composed over time: biographies or life stories are lived and told, retold and relived. Education is interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling our life stories." (p.247). As I travelled backward to my early landscapes and then forward, I realized I had been silencing my lived experiences. For anyone who has silenced their living curriculum, their lived experiences, has been on the margins.

As an educator, I recognize the vital importance of creating spaces for my students to "inter-be" as Nhat (2006, p.76) reminds me. We are not isolated beings for "no man is an island." Our narratives inevitably touch others' narratives, connecting us as we co-compose a curriculum of lives. Greene, too, shares the importance of giving students the time and space to begin to tell stories of "what they know and might yet not

know, exchanging stories with others grounded in other landscapes, at once bringing something into being that is in-between" (1993, p.218). It is this "in-between" space that Greene describes that allows us to discover who we are and who we are to one another as we write in between the margins in our interwoven webs of relationships.

In coming to know who I am and am becoming, I began to attend to the webs of relationships in my life, creating spaces to live "in-between" and imagine otherwise. My stories are shaped and reshaped as I attend to the multiple plotlines in the webs of my life. To understand who I am in any narrative sense, I must understand the threads of my interwoven, intergenerational stories. I am a little girl who treasured memories of many homeplaces, places I had grown to love. I am a daughter who understands the loving perception that my mother has unknowingly taught me. I know that bean sprouts do matter. I am an educator who works to dispel assumptions and labels. I understand that it is possible to feel our hearts on both sides of our chest. I work to honour my students' living curricula by giving them the time and space to write their own stories. I am able to listen to their stories and "add a dab of glue to the important words that burst forth" (Paley, 1986, p.121). By attending to the interwoven vibrations in my life stories, my family's stories and my students' stories, I am a 'world traveler' in the way Lugones (1987) means as she reminds me of my capacity to remember other worlds and to see myself in them. I am able to imagine the world through my students' eyes. I can say, "I've been there too. I live alongside of you."

Although I was deeply humbled to have recently received a teaching award, I know that labels and accolades do not define who I was, who I am or who I will become. My life stories are shaped and continue to be shaped by stories of those I am so fortunate to

have live alongside of me. My mother reminds me of this when she wrote me this letter attached to a congratulatory card.

> Simmee,
>
> Congratulations you are one of ton good teacher. Mom's English is very poor, but still try my best to write, hope you understand what I mean. All my family is so happy and hoping you keep going and do better and better. O.K. sweet heart. Now I send you some lucky money you can go out have a big meal ok. I will see you soon. Enjoy yourself Honey. I love you so much. Congratulation again.
>
> Dad & Mom & Family (letter, April 25, 2008)

This was the first letter my mother had ever written to me. It was also the first time she wrote more than a sentence in English. I cried as I hung onto my mother's loving words as I knew every word was carefully thought out, just so. I know this letter will not be the last, for my mother and I will keep writing new stories-together. Numbered birthday cakes, a tattered teddy bear, a community garden, a singular fading flower, bean sprouts, tensions in our hearts-these are not things at all. These are our stories, stories that give our lives rhythm, enriching our interwoven, interconnected lives. As I imagined new possibilities in my narrative landscape, Clandinin and Connelly (1998) remind me that, "It is through this inquiry, in our conversations with each other, with texts, with situations, and with other stories that we can come to retelling our stories and to reliving them"(p.251).

On my most recent visit with my mother, she handed me a bagful of old congratulatory cards from my grade twelve graduation, an event that happened over a decade ago. She told me she held onto them as she thought I might like to have them as keepsakes. At first I was inclined to quickly toss the cards and to begin my rant to my mother regarding her packrat behavior, but then I stopped myself. I stayed awake to knowing that these were not just cards. These cards reminded me of earlier stories, new possibilities to imagine, representing the intricate webs in my life. I find myself weaving MacLachlan's (1995) words into my new ways of knowing, "What you know first stays with you…" but just in case I forget, I know the threads in my life will remind me to not take our stories for granted. My mother and my interwoven stories remind me of where I came from. I understand that what I know first is a part of me, but not the whole of me. My identity, my stories to live by, are multiple. My life is an ongoing journey. Greene reminds me that, "Neither myself nor my narrative can have, therefore, a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on the way" (1995, p.1).

As I sat in an overflowing room filled with other world travelers at the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) 2008 conference in New York City, we had the privilege of wondering alongside Greene who recently celebrated ninety years of living with possibilities. Speaking ever so eloquently, Maxine Greene's words wrapped around me, "I am what I am not yet…" Awakened, I know that I am not closing this narrative with these words, I am only beginning. As I imagine and re-imagine the open-ended spaces in my life, I am present to who I am and I live in the possibilities of who I am, not yet…

References

Aoki, T. (1993). Legitimating lived curriculum: Towards a curricular landscape of multiplicity. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 8(3), 255-268.

Clandinin, D.J., Steeves, P., Chung, S. (2007). Creating narrative inquiry spaces in teacher education. In Johnston, B. & Walls, K. (Eds). *Voices and Vision in Language Teacher Education; Selected Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Language Teacher Education* (CARLA Working Paper Series),pp.17-33. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, The Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, S., Murray Orr, A., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. New York: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F. M. (1998). Asking Questions About Telling Stories. In C. Kridel (Ed.), *Writing Educational Biography: Explorations in Qualitative Research*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. (pp.245-253).

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M.(1992). Teacher as curriculum maker. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum*, pp. 363-401). Toronto: Macmillan.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. Green, G. Camilli & P. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 375-385). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Greene, M. (2008, March). *From bare facts to intellectual possibility: The leap of imagination: A conversation with Maxine Greene*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Greene, M. (1993). *Diversity and inclusion: Toward a curriculum for human beings*. Teachers College Record, 95 (2): 211-221

Lugones, M. (1987). *Playfulness, "World"-travelling, and loving perception*. Hypatia, 2(2): 3-37.

MacLachlan, P. & Moser, B. (1995). *What you know first*. Canada: Joanna Cotler Books.

Miller, J. (1998). Autobiography and the Necessary Incompleteness of Teachers' Stories. In W. Ayers & J. Miller (Eds.), *A light in dark times: Maxine Greene and the unfinished conversation*. New York: Teachers College Press. (pp. 145-154).

Nhat, T. H. (2003). *Creating true peace: Ending violence in yourself, your family, your community, and the world*. Toronto: Free Press. (Chapter 3: Peace Begins with Us: Taking Your Practice into the World, pp. 54-75).

Setterfield, D. (2006). *The thirteenth tale*. Canada: Bond Street Books.

Vinz, R. (1997). Capturing a moving form: Becoming as teachers. *English Education*, 29 (2), 137-146.

Chapter 4: A Reflective Turn: Moving towards composing a "curriculum of lives"

Beginning with a 'master' story

As Aoki (1993) described in his own self-facing as a teacher, I, too, began my first year of teaching with "curriculum guides woven into a master story" (p. 264). As a character in this 'master' story that was already written, I merely enacted the script, carrying out the "curriculum-as-planned" (Aoki, p.264). I made sure I taught the curriculum objectives as outlined by policy makers. I consulted with my daily planning book that kept me "on task" and "on schedule." Yet, I felt there was always something that happened in the ongoing life in the classroom that disrupted *my* rhythm. These things seemed like stories that I did not know how or where to fit into the already brimming mandated curriculum.

Having been so fortunate to have taught in a multiplicity of school settings composed of diverse children from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, I increasingly began to experience a different curriculum, one almost invisible, voiceless. However, these vibrations grew strength, as the children's stories of their lives inevitably crept into the classroom curriculum that was already mandated and for which I had carefully planned. Although I began to hear these vibrations, I did not know how and when to make spaces for these stories while still attending to the "planned curriculum" (Clandinin, et.al, 2006). In my own ways, I attempted to attend to this "other" curriculum, the one that was shaped by the lives of the children as much as I could, while still keeping the mandated and planned curriculum at the forefront.

It was through my autobiographical narrative inquiry and inquiry into the interwoven intergenerational narratives of children and their families, that I began to learn why and how I could begin to let go of my "master story." I am awake in knowing that for children and their families to be a part of the story, we have to live, tell, retell and relive our stories together. Before I began to engage in this work, I was busy attending to the curriculum-as-planned. Children's and family stories such as the stories of Ji-Sook and Vlad, reminded me of the importance of attending not only to the planned curriculum but also to a "curriculum of lives" (Clandinin, et.al., 2006). I began to ask myself questions about the place of subject matter in composing a curriculum of lives. Does the subject matter of mathematics, sciences, language arts, and other curricular subjects have any relevance at all in composing a curriculum if we do not attend to lives, the lives of the children, parents and myself, as starting points and move from lives to subject matter (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007)?

This study helped me understand that what I initially thought was taking me "off course"was "the other curriculum....the lived curriculum."(Aoki, 1993, p.264). It is now that I can be "on course" as I move forward, seeing 'big' as well as seeing 'small', rather than being confined to my previously recycled, unchallenged "cul-de-sac" ways of thinking and attending as I held on to my preconceived notions and labels as ways of seeing the world and others (Clandinin, Steeves, Chung, 2007). Where I used to see only 'small', seeing 'big' enabled me to attend more closely and openly to the most important curriculum of all, that is, to a curriculum of lives that the children, their families and I compose with me, before me, and alongside me. In an achievement testing era of increased accountability, Greene (1995) reminds me of the importance of not losing

sight of seeing 'big'. She writes, "When applied to schooling, the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable" (p.10).

Letting go of the 'master' story

Connelly and Clandinin (1995) ask," How does the embodied, narrative, relational knowledge teachers carry autobiographically and by virtue of their formal education shape, and become shaped by, their professional knowledge context (p.3)?" It was through this inquiry into understanding the personal practical knowledge that I hold and that children and their families hold, that my practice has been shaped and reshaped. Aoki (1993), too, reminds me of how we are all holders of knowledge when he states that we must "give way to a more open landscape that offers possibilities by, in part, giving legitimacy to the wisdom held in lived stories of people who dwell within the landscape (p.267). "

Maxine Greene (1995) provokes me "to tap into imagination" by breaking with what is seemingly fixed and finished and objectively real (p.19). Her words guide me into letting go of my 'master story" for myself, for my mother, my students, and their families. Greene (1995) writes of finding our own stories, our own voices when she writes,

> Others determine "exactly" what "you are" and use fixed names, to be yourself is to be in process of creating a self, an identity. If it were not a process, there would be no surprise. The surprise comes along with becoming different-

> consciously different as one finds ways of acting on envisaged possibility. It comes along with hearing different words and music, seeing from accustomed angles, realizing that the world perceived from one place is not *the* world…Moreover to learn and to teach, one must have an awareness of leaving something behind while reaching toward something new, and this kind of awareness must be linked to imagination" (p.20).

As an educator, this study brought me to understanding and knowing the importance of negotiating a curriculum of lives alongside children and their families. As I have come to know that classroom curriculum making is woven with identity making, this knowing has shaped and reshaped my teaching practice (Mitton, Murray Orr, Clandinin, Chung, in press). No longer do I just try to "fit in" spaces for the children's and families stories to be heard. Now I work to open and create spaces that allow me to attend more closely to all of the interwoven webs in our storied lives. I work to create spaces for children to share and reflect upon their lived experiences as well the open-ended possibilities for their lives as well as for the lives of others.

In coming to know more of what has shaped my childhood and who I have become, my curiosity stays with me as I wonder about the webs of lives vibrating in the classroom. I wonder if the children know who they are and where they came from. I wonder what they know of each other. In coming to understand the importance of identity making as curriculum making, I, alongside other researchers, engaged with children and families in what would unfold to be a seven month long narrative inquiry project we came to know as 'Citizenship Education" (Mitton, Clandinin, Huber, Chung,

2008). In this narrative inquiry project, literature was used as a springboard for conversations about who the children were and were becoming as citizens. As children connected with the literature, open dialogue began with one another as they shared and responded to each other's lived stories. In opening this space, stories of hope, friendship, beliefs, traditions, and their experiences of belonging came forth. Tensions were present as stories bumped against other stories. Some students chose to share their anxieties of coming to, and being in, a new country. I was awakened to hearing the children's stories including those stories that were filled with tensions for the children. Not knowing what to expect, at times I was surprised by their openness in sharing. I realized that, in the relational space that was the citizenship education project, we were composing a safe space, a space where it was possible to tell the hard to tell stories. Greene reminds me of the importance of safe spaces to share and hear one another's stories. She writes,

> Our classrooms ought to be nurturing and thoughtful and just all at once; they ought to pulsate with multiple conceptions of what it is to be human and alive. They ought to resound with the voices of articulate young in dialogues always incomplete because there is always more to be discovered and more to be said. We must want our students to achieve friendship as each one stirs to wide-awakeness, to imaginative action, and to renewed consciousness of possibility (1995, p.43).

As the inquiry continued to unfold, children created and shared time/lifelines, engaged in photography work, created identity collages, and symbolic representations

through role-play and skits. As we co-composed a curriculum of lives around who the children were and who they wanted to be, their stories and their families' stories became the heart of the classroom curriculum making. As my teaching practice changed shape, I knew I was letting go of my 'master' story. This unknowing enables me to attend to the complex and diverse lives of children and their families. With new ways of knowing the children and myself, learning for all of us in the classroom, can begin to take flight.

I opened this thesis with Greene's (1995) words as she reminded me of the interwoven, threads of stories in my life as I continue my narrative journey into who I am and who I want to be. I turn to her words again as I end.

> The narratives I have encountered in my journey have made it possible for me to conceive patterns of being as my life among others has expanded: to look through others' eyes more than I would have and to imagine being something more than I have come to be (Greene, 1995, p.85-86).

References

Aoki, T. (1993). Legitimating lived curriculum: Towards a curricular landscape of multiplicity. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 8(3), 255-268.

Chung, S., Clandinin, D.J., Mitton, J.,& Huber, J. (2008, May). *Attending to diverse lives in school: Learning from stories of children and families.* Presented to Learning and Teaching Resources Branch Alberta Education, Edmonton.

Clandinin, D. J., Huber, J., Huber, M., Murphy, S., Murray Orr, A., Pearce, M., & Steeves, P. (2006). *Composing diverse identities: Narrative inquiries into the interwoven lives of children and teachers*. New York: Routledge.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F. M. (1998). Asking questions about telling stories. In C. Kridel (Ed.), *Writing educational biography: Explorations in qualitative research.* New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. (pp.245-253).

Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Greene, M. (1993). *Diversity and inclusion: Toward a curriculum for human beings*. Teachers College Record, 95 (2): 211-221

Mitton, J. (2008). *A Narrative inquiry into children's and families' lives in classroom curriculum making*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Mitton, J., Murray Orr, A., Clandinin, D.J., Chung, S. (in press). *Narrative matters in teacher education: Attending to lives in motion on shifting landscapes.* AILA Review.